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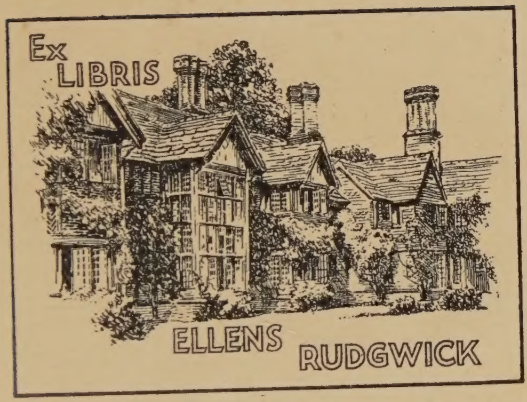
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(William Sidney Porter)

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Editorial Note

A SHORT story may be a mere anecdote of three hundred words or a work of ten or fifteen thousand. In content it may be anything from a glimpse of character, an incident, to a highly finished picture of life. But it should be a complete work of imagination, its effect achieved with a minimum of personages and events.

TO select the best thousand examples was a task that could be achieved only on arbitrary lines. As to length, three thousand words was the ideal average, but this excluded some of the finest stories, so exceptions had to be allowed. National characteristics also had consideration. Another test was the value of a story as illustrating the development of the art.

PROBLEMS of arrangement were not entirely solved by classification according to the country of each writer's origin. This puts Richard Steele into the Irish volume and separates those ideal literary partners Agnes and Egerton Castle. But it is the best possible arrangement for the work, and the index makes reference easy. The inclusion of a series of stories of the War became possible when the War itself ruled out all modern German work.

A WORD as to the method of selection. The general editor prepared a trial list of titles, which was submitted to all the members of the Editorial Board, who rejected and added according to their individual tastes and knowledge. These individual lists were then collated and the final list evolved. The thousand stories selected are therefore representative of the combined opinion of the whole group of editors. A very few modifications of the final list were made necessary by difficulties of copyright and considerations of Anglo-Saxon taste in certain translations from foreign literatures.

MOST of the foreign stories have been specially translated, and all copyrights, in both stories and translations, the use of which authors and publishers have courteously permitted, are duly credited at the end of each volume. J. A. H.

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American Story-Tellers

The Moderns and "O. Henry"

TO the reader of this volume of the world's best short stories—those written by American authors born during the second half of the nineteenth century—one very noticeable feature will be the range and change in the method of the story-tellers. In the opening stories we find that blending of the sentimental and the humorous which may be held to be the expression of Victorian humanitarianism. The term Victorian is not altogether out of place here, for, apart from deviations into dialect and similar emphasis of what a decade or two ago was denominated "local colour," essentially a great part of the American output of fiction was a contribution to English literature. Before we reach the end, however, we find the American short story becoming the expression of something racily indigenous.

In the earlier periods, Edgar Allan Poe, Bret Harte, and Ambrose Bierce, the first two of world-wide repute, the third even yet short of his due meed of popular fame, stood out as masters in the special art of short-story telling. In this later period, among all the varied excellences displayed in the fifty-four stories by thirty-eight writers, easily and unchallengeably first stands the work signed by the simple pen-name of "O. Henry."

G. W. Cable and E. S. Phelps

IN the opening story, "'Sieur George," we get a picture tenderly and sympathetically rendered by George W. Cable (b. 1844) of old-time life in New Orleans, and more especially of the poor, ineffective old man who has ruined others as well as himself in wild attempts at grasping fortune through the medium of lottery tickets. In "Posson Jone'" we have something of the same tenderness combined with droll humour in the contrast between the elegant little city Creole and the naïve country parson, with surprise in the way in which the latter recovers his money. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps (b. 1844) was one of the most popular writers of her generation, and "Little Tommy Tucker" well represents her power of combining the sentimental with the dramatic.

AS writer of "An Old Sailor's Yarns" Captain Roland Coffin proved himself an adept at the spinning of salt-water yarns, and "How Old Wiggins Wore Ship" is a capital rendering of the old idea of the ruling passion being strong in death, a vivid page from the history of the olden cross-Atlantic sailing ships. Captain Coffin appears out of chronological order, the period of his writing being ascertained when the Library was in process of compilation, but the date of his birth (1826) was only found when the sheets had gone to press. A remarkable contrast is afforded by the next story, "An Ulm," in which Stanley Waterloo (b. 1846) tells with vivid intensity the way in which a dog was trained to murder the man with whom its trainer's wife was philandering. With the work of Joel Chandler Harris (1848–1908) we reach one of the classics of American fiction in the short story form, for his tales of quaint nigger lore associated with the name of his supposed narrator, Uncle Remus, are marked by an individuality and drollery that are all their own. The two stories here given, "Brer Rabbit's Cradle" and "Brer Rabbit and the Tar Baby," are among the most delicious instances of the way in which the seemingly simple Brer Rabbit always overreaches and outdoes his cunning neighbours.

Stanley Waterloo

Chandler Harris

The negro has provided the American story-teller with great variety of material, and Mrs. Katherine Sherwood Bonner McDowell (1849–83), whose life was too short fully to develop her excellent gifts as narrator, tells a quaint tale in her account of "Hieronymus Pop and the Baby," and tells it with an engaging touch of humour. It is interesting to note that Mrs. McDowell acted for some years as secretary to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

K. S. B. McDowell

Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904) was a writer whose memory is closely associated with his long sojourn in Japan, and with his books especially devoted to that land. He was of mixed Irish-Greek parentage, and finds his place among American writers because it was in America that he passed the longest period of his wandering life and there established himself as a writer. His skill is well represented here in "The Soul of the Great Bell," a Chinese story of self-sacrifice that has parallels in the folk-tales of many lands.

Lafcadio Hearn

IT is still the touch of a sweet and pleasant sentiment which is found in the work of Mary Stewart Cutting (b. 1851), whose story "The Happiest Time" delicately traverses the common belief or assumption that such a time is the period during which a young couple are engaged. The contrast between the happy married pair and the young couple made miserable by imaginary grievances is very subtly indicated in a simple and effective tale. Robert Grant (b. 1852) is represented by a story, "Against his Judgment," which skilfully shows that a man's considered views do not necessarily govern his actions, that impulse is likely to act on a certain line transcending any result of the balancing of pros and cons by reason.

Mary S. Cutting and Robert Grant

Thomas Nelson Page (b. 1853) established his reputation as a master of the short story with his volume of negro tales, "In Ole Virginia," which was happily summed up as being "a series of black classics, wherein the colour is an accident, the soul human and universal." How true this is, is well shown in the story which is given here. "Ole 'Stracted," the solitary nigger who lives on in the faith of seeing the master from whom he had been sold, the wife and child from whom he had been separated, is a pathetic and beautiful figure, and his faith is in part justified by the dramatic discovery as he is dying that his nearest neighbours and only friends are the longed-for son and his family.

Nelson Page

As novelist, humorist, and verse-writer as well as writer of short stories, Henry Cuyler Bunner (1855–96) established a reputation during the last dozen years of his life. His mastery of the art of the short story irradiated by humour is admirably illustrated in the first of his stories here given. "The Nice People" is indeed a delicious piece of comedy consequent upon a newly-wedded couple determining to pass themselves off on the honeymoon-trip as a staid and experienced married pair. It affords a "situation" out of which rapidly develop complications that lead to a doubt whether the couple are married at all, and the new Adam and Eve are only saved from expulsion from their hotel-Eden by the involuntary display of evidence which converts melancholy into hilarity. In "A Letter and a Paragraph" the same author is seen to advantage in that more serious vein which is part of the make-up of every true humorist.

H. C. Bunner

AMONG the distinguished lawyers who have won also to notable positions in the literary field is Frederic Jesup Stimson (b. 1855), whose novels and stories have met with cordial appreciation in America. In "Mrs. Knollys" he has made romantic and effective use of the theory of the movement of glaciers, in the tragic tale of a young couple whose married life is broken by the bridegroom's fall into a crevasse in the Carinthian Alps. It is a pathetic story told with simplicity and restraint, and one that shows the author's skill as narrator, for we read it as an actual chronicle rather than with any feeling that it is merely fiction. Something of the same sense of reality pervades the remarkable story of "Brother Sebastian's Friendship," by Harold Frederic (1856–98). The writer of this story was already well known as a journalist when he published some notable novels and a series of striking short stories, of which this is finely representative. "Brother Sebastian's Friendship," in the intensity of its theme and the reticence of its telling, may indeed be regarded as something of a model of story-telling art. We finish it with the feeling that the narrator, Brother Sebastian, has himself told the strange story with its striking *dénouement*, that he has conveyed to us the actual feelings of the solitary to whom befell such a remarkable experience.

F. J. Stimson

Harold Frederic

With "The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number," by Gertrude

Atherton (b. 1857), we reach a short story by a writer best known as the author of full-length novels. In this problem set in short story form, she shows how well she could also utilise the briefer kind of fiction. Wholly dissimilar as the stories are in treatment, the problem which faces the doctor in this tale is precisely that which had been discussed by the hero of Robert Grant's "Against his Judgment," who decided that a man did wrong in saving a strange child's life at the cost of his own, seeing that his death left his own family helpless. So in this story the doctor who could save a cocaine victim's life refrains from doing so in the interests of the victim's family. In the one case a man's judgment concerning the act of another is reversed by his own spontaneous act on a similar occasion arising, in the other the doctor reverses all professional tradition by deciding to withhold the drug which might have saved a life; and considerable skill is evinced in presenting the mental struggle which culminates in his decision.

Gertrude Atherton

ANOTHER kind of problem is that which is represented in the next story of this volume—and another problem of a kind such as came up for discussion in fiction and elsewhere towards the close of the last century. In "A Maid of Modern Athens"—the Modern Athens of the American author being Boston—Edgar Everton Saltus (b. 1858) is concerned with the inadequate knowledge of each other possessed by the average man and woman before marriage, and with the way in which one young woman dealt with the problem by which she was confronted. Though more of a novelist than a short-story writer the author proved himself a skilful handler of the briefer form of fiction. The position of Henry Harland (1861–1905) in later nineteenth century letters is especially interesting in that he was established as an American novelist (under the pen-name of "Sidney Luska") and journalist when he gained a fresh literary reputation in London as editor of "The Yellow Book," which did much to encourage the vogue of the short story of special literary distinction. His own work, marked by picturesqueness of style and frequently by a graceful humour, is well represented here by "A Broken Looking-Glass."

Edgar Saltus

Henry Harland

The short New England stories and sketches of character associated with the name of Mary E. Wilkins (Mrs. Freeman) (b. 1862) appear to mark a definite epoch in the development of the American short story. It was something of a new kind of realism which the writer was able to represent, a realism that impressed upon the reader the actualities of people and places and at the same time gave them with a sense of "atmosphere," and revealed in remarkable fashion the individual idiosyncrasies of seemingly everyday folks. "A Far Away Melody" is thoroughly representative of this writer's choice of theme and careful and impressive treatment. Mary E. Wilkins may be regarded as a writer who excelled especially in the short story, while in "The Moving Finger," by

Mary E. Wilkins

Edith Wharton (b. 1862), we reach a further example of a novelist's short story. It is a telling and effective romance of a portrait that might interestingly be compared with Oscar Wilde's celebrated story of "The Picture of Dorian Gray." **Edith Wharton**

Tales of the doings of the Indians are more characteristic of earlier periods of American fiction than of that which is represented in the present volume, yet life on the frontier of civilisation is most impressively employed in "The Indian's Hand" by Lorimer Stoddard (1863–1901). It is a grim and powerful tale of the doings of raiders near the Mexican border and of the intensity of hate of a mother whose boy has been carried off; and it is carried to a tensely terrible conclusion, showing fine tragic power on the part of the writer. In "The Man who Worked for Collister," Mary Tracy Earle (b. 1864) shows something of the comedy to be evolved from among the people of a scant and scattered community. It is a story peculiarly American in atmosphere as in action. Novelist, traveller, and war-correspondent, Richard Harding Davis (1864–1916) was also an accomplished artist in the telling of short stories, as is well shown in the two contrasting examples here given, the somewhat uproarious story of "How Hefty Burke Got Even" with the police and the simple account of "A Recruit at Christmas." **Mary Tracy Earle** **Richard Harding Davis**

EXCEPT in so far as two or three of them, Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page and Mary E. Wilkins, for instance, struck new veins in the manner of their interpretation of American life, the story writers so far considered dealt more or less closely with the short story in a way little different from that of English short-story writers on this side of the Atlantic. It was William Sydney Porter (1867–1910) who won to great popularity under his pen-name of "O. Henry" shortly before his early death, who not only pegged out a claim to originality as an American short-story writer, but abundantly proved his title to it. His first published volume, "Cabbages and Kings," one long story, was perhaps the least successful of his works. His great gift was that of short-story writing, and his work in this form is as surprising in its range and fulness as it is in its general excellence and its uniform individuality. **"O. Henry"**

It might indeed be claimed that "O. Henry's" short stories form the most markedly indigenous contribution to literature that has yet been made by America. His sharply rapped-out short sentences, his use of language for which a stickler for "Addisonian English" might reasonably be expected to require glossarial aid, are things that may jar at first, but as we pass from one to another of his stories these are soon overlooked in the growing admiration of the man's sheer gift for story-telling. Here is a writer who within the compass of the short story proves himself a veritable master of the witchery of words, of words employed not in any sensuous, ear-gratifying order which shall merely emphasise the beauty of sound, but words employed as an artist

uses colours to produce something that makes us forget the material of which it was composed. Here, we feel, are chunks, as it were, of American life, from the crowded city or the lone frontier places, romantic, tragic, comic.

If we seek for any unifying characteristic of these stories it is to be found—apart from the individuality displayed in the manner of the telling—in the informing sense of the ironical in the progression of the events. It is not a bitter irony, not even an emphasised irony, but it is implicit in a large proportion of the stories written by a man whose life was itself an instance of the irony of circumstance. So assuredly has "O. Henry" taken his place as the dominating voice of the short story in America during the first decades of the twentieth century, that it was essential that he should be more fully represented than his fellows in a work such as this. The dozen stories here given fully illustrate his seemingly inexhaustible invention, his extraordinary vigour as narrator, and the amazing knowledge of and insight into character of which he gives evidence.

IN "The Trimmed Lamp" there is a striking contrast in the presentation of two city work girls, the one flamboyantly out for a good time, and her quiet friend who prefers to work at a lower wage that she may acquire something of refinement from her surroundings. In "The Last of the Troubadours" we pass to the contrasting solitude of ranch life, and in the tragic close of the story of the "troubadour" and his host have a veritable masterpiece of the ironical, while "The Passing of Black Eagle" is a triumphantly successful tale of a tramp who, by dressing the part and possessing the gift of the gab, became leader of a band of desperadoes on the Texan border and then disappeared in the very moment of the great train hold-up which he had engineered. Something of the author's power of the eerie and the grim is shown in "The Furnished Room"; a pleasant humour is disclosed in "The Defeat of the City," with its gentle surprise at the end; while in "The Cop and the Anthem" is rendered with remarkable skill the irony of things, when a man who makes several attempts to ensure imprisonment by breaking the law fails to get arrested and is then "run in" for pausing to listen to an anthem played in a church—an anthem which has touched a chord of memory that has just moved the ne'er-do-weel to resolutions of reformation.

In "The Last Leaf" we have something of the tenderly romantic in the story of the sick woman's fancy that her life will fail with the falling of the last leaf from the tree outside her window. In "The Lost Blend" we pass to an amusing drollery concerning mixed drinks and a pleasant hint of the effect of the "blend," refound, on the tongue of a shy wooer. Another kind of humour is shown in "Vanity and Some Sables," and there is an almost plaintive variation on the theme that things are not what they seem in "Lost on Dress Parade." "Roses, Ruses, and Romance" affords in itself a contrast between the poetic dreamer and his friend the practical man, while the last of the dozen

examples by which "O. Henry's" remarkable genius as a short-story writer is here illustrated, "Little Speck in Garnered Fruit," is as impressive as any of its companions, for vigour of conception and for freshness and terseness of presentation. In all these stories it will be recognised with what remarkable economy of means the writer attains his end not only of holding us entertained but of revealing as well his wide knowledge of and insight into varied human character, normal and abnormal.

PECULIARLY notable as an intimate story of the sea is "The Magnetic Hearth" by James B. Connolly (b. 1868), and it is perhaps only the more notable in that highly successful stories of the sea by American writers are by no means numerous. Here the very movement of the returning ship as she presses under every stitch of canvas, homeward bound, seems to be imparted with vividness and vigour by the magic of the author's phrasing. It is a strikingly successful example of the short story that owes its very being to a kind of genius for interpretative description. Another short story of the sea to which the term great might not unfittingly be applied is "The Raft" by Alexander Harvey (b. 1868).

J. B. Connolly

Stephen Crane (1870–1900) was a writer who with "The Red Badge of Courage" won a high reputation as a realistic delineator of the horrors of warfare. "The Veteran," the short story by which he is here represented, is a capital instance of his graphic power. Grimly powerful, too, is the story of "The Cat of the Cane-Brake," by Frederick Stuart Greene (b. 1870), rendering as it does the sense of hopelessness of an ill-matched couple dwelling in desolate loneliness.

Stephen Crane

Great and varied is the gift for drollery possessed by American story-tellers, and though the tale of a blind man does not suggest any possibility of hilarity, "Such as Walk in Darkness," by Samuel Hopkins Adams (b. 1871), is surely provocative of one good laugh. It is a happy example of the story that passes by sudden surprise from the serious to the ludicrous.

S. H. Adams

WITH Jack London (1876–1916) we reach a story-teller who, though nearly a decade younger than "O. Henry," was already established as a favourite when the older man blazed into fame. Jack London represented in fiction at first the new taste for natural history presented in terms of romance; he wrote of the creatures of the wild in intimate personal fashion, in novels, and in brief tales, but he soon went further afield and with realistic stories now of the Klondyke, and now of the South Seas, proved himself a capital limner of unconventional life. His tale of "The Sickness of Lone Chief" is a triumphant example of the story of great doings given verisimilitude by the natural conditions in which it is supposed to be narrated, while "The Whale Tooth" is scarcely less impressive as a narrative of the struggle between missionary zeal and innate savagery in the early days of the opening up of the Fiji

Jack London

Islands. Whether dealing with the North or South the author is possessed of the true gift of story-telling.

IT is a grim memory of the struggle between North and South that affords the motive of "In the Wake of War" by Hallie Erminie Rives (b. 1876). The story renders in skilful fashion the bringing together in after life of two who had met in a horrible episode in the fratricidal struggle. In "The Belled Buzzard," by Irvin S. Cobb (b. 1876), however, the trouble begins immediately after the perpetration of the deed, and events work up rapidly and remorselessly to the dramatic collapse of the culprit. It is a grim story well told that would bear the test of comparison, both in invention and narrative skill, with the work of "O. Henry."

Later Writers.

The next one of our stories, "Zelig," by Benjamin Rosenblatt (b. 1880), may be taken here as indicative of something of a change—and not a change for the better—in the American art of short-story telling. The great short-story writers of the West, as represented by such a trio as Bret Harte, Ambrose Bierce, and "O. Henry," had found more or less fresh and characteristic ways of rendering life, romantically, tragically, or humorously, within the limits of brief fiction. In the later part of the period covered by the present volume two new influences seem to be traceable; one, that exercised by immigrants from Eastern Europe and the other that of self-conscious "literary expression." "Zelig" might be one of the grey-toned, hopeless, but powerfully-presented products of Russian literary pessimism, while the succeeding apologue of "The Whale and the Grasshopper," by Seumas O'Brien (b. 1880), is an extremely good instance of the short story as a product of ingenious literary invention.

It is something of a reversion to the type of story in which Mary E. Wilkins excelled that we find in "Ma's Pretties," by Francis Buzzell (b. 1882). "When did You Write Your Mother Last?" by Addison Lewis (b. 1889), reveals this younger writer as no mean disciple of the school of "O. Henry," displaying as it does something of that master's utilisation of the irony of circumstance in the posthumous fate of a "good-for-nothing old hobo," who "couldn't quit kiddin' even when he croaked." It is again something of the underworld of a big city's population that is displayed in the next story, "Supers," by Frederick Booth. Still more poignant is "Whose Dog—?" by Frances Gregg, in which, short as it is, the author has told much directly, and indirectly implied much more, in a mere two pages setting forth the fate of the village drunkard. In the last two stories of this volume we are afforded a striking contrast. "Clothes," by Gustav Kobbe, is an effective essay in the sardonic; and with "The End of the Path," by Newbold Noyes, we close on the note of romance admirably handled, and suggesting that with all the changes observable among the American short stories of the first quarter of the twentieth century "old-fashioned" romance may yet continue to hold its place.

W. J.

GEORGE W. CABLE
B. 1844

'SIEUR GEORGE

IN the heart of New Orleans stands a large four-story brick building, that has so stood for about three-quarters of a century. Its rooms are rented to a class of persons occupying them simply for lack of activity to find better and cheaper quarters elsewhere. With its grey stucco peeling off in broad patches, it has a solemn look of gentility in rags, and stands, or, as it were, hangs, about the corner of two ancient streets, like a faded fop who pretends to be looking for employment.

Under its main archway is a dingy apothecary shop. On one street is the bazaar of a *modiste en robes et chapeaux* and other humble shops; on the other, the immense batten doors with gratings over the lintels, barred and bolted with masses of cobwebbed iron, like the door of a donjon, are overhung by a creaking sign (left by the sheriff), on which is faintly discernible the mention of wines and liquors. A peep through one of the shops reveals a square court within, hung with many lines of wet clothes, its sides hugged by rotten staircases that seem vainly trying to clamber out of the rubbish.

The neighbourhood is one long since given up to fifth-rate shops, whose masters and mistresses display such enticing mottoes as "*Au gagne petit!*" Innumerable children swarm about, and, by some charm of the place, are not run over, but obstruct the banquettes playing their clamorous games.

The building is a thing of many windows, where passably good-looking women appear and disappear, clad in cotton gowns, watering little outside shelves of flowers and cacti, or hanging canaries' cages. Their husbands are keepers in wine warehouses, rent-collectors for the agents of old Frenchmen who have been laid up to dry in Paris, custom-house supernumeraries and court-clerks' deputies (for your second-rate Creole is a great seeker for little offices). A decaying cornice hangs over, dropping bits of mortar on passers below, like a boy at a boarding-house.

The landlord is one Kookoo, an ancient Creole of doubtful purity

of blood, who in his landlordly old age takes all suggestions of repairs as personal insults. He was but a stripling when his father left him this inheritance, and has grown old and wrinkled and brown, a sort of periodically animate mummy, in the business. He smokes cascarilla, wears velveteen, and is as punctual as an executioner.

To Kookoo's venerable property a certain old man used for many years to come every evening, stumbling through the groups of prattling children who frolicked about in the early moonlight—whose name no one knew, but whom all the neighbours designated by the title of 'Sieur George. It was his wont to be seen taking a straight—too straight—course toward his home, never careening to right or left, but now forcing himself slowly forward, as though there were a high gale in front, and now scudding briskly ahead at a ridiculous little dog-trot, as if there were a tornado behind. He would go up the main staircase very carefully, sometimes stopping half-way up for thirty or forty minutes' doze, but getting to the landing eventually, and tramping into his room in the second story, with no little elation to find it still there. Were it not for these slight symptoms of potations, he was such a one as you would pick out of a thousand for a miser. A year or two ago he suddenly disappeared.

A great many years ago, when the old house was still new, a young man with no baggage save a small hair-trunk came and took the room I have mentioned and another adjoining. He supposed he might stay fifty days—and he stayed fifty years and over. This was a very fashionable neighbourhood, and he kept the rooms on that account month after month.

But when he had been here about a year something happened to him—so it was rumoured—that greatly changed the tenor of his life; and from that time on there began to appear in him and to accumulate upon each other in a manner which became the profound study of Kookoo, the symptoms of a decay, whose cause baffled the landlord's limited powers of conjecture for well-nigh half a century. Hints of a duel, of a reason warped, of disinheritance, and many other unauthorised rumours, fluttered up and floated off, while he became recluse, and, some say, began incidentally to betray the unmanly habit which we have already noticed. His neighbours would have continued neighbourly had he allowed them, but he never let himself be understood, and *les Américaines* are very droll anyhow; so, as they could do nothing else, they cut him.

So exclusive he became that (though it may have been for economy) he never admitted even a housemaid, but kept his apartments himself. Only the merry serenaders, who in those times used to sing under the balconies, would now and then give him a crumb of their feast for pure fun's sake; and after a while, because they could not find out his full name, called him, at hazard, George—but always prefixing Monsieur. Afterward, when he began to be careless in his dress, and the fashion of serenading had passed away, the commoner people dared to shorten the title to " 'Sieur George."

Many seasons came and went. The city changed like a growing boy; gentility and fashion went up-town, but 'Sieur George still retained his rooms. Every one knew him slightly, and bowed, but no one seemed to know him well, unless it were a brace or so of those convivial fellows in regulation blue at little Fort St. Charles. He often came home late, with one of these on either arm, all singing different tunes and stopping at every twenty steps to tell secrets. But by-and-by the fort was demolished, church and government property melted down under the warm demand for building-lots, the city spread like a ringworm—and one day 'Sieur George steps out of the old house in full regimentals!

The Creole neighbours rush bareheaded into the middle of the street, as though there were an earthquake or a chimney on fire. What to do or say or think they do not know; they are at their wits' ends, therefore well-nigh happy. However, there is a German blacksmith's shop near by, and they watch to see what *Jacob* will do. Jacob steps into the street with every eye upon him; he approaches Monsieur —he addresses to him a few remarks—they shake hands—they engage in some conversation—Monsieur places his hand on his sword!—now Monsieur passes.

The populace crowd around the blacksmith, children clap their hands softly and jump up and down on tiptoes of expectation— 'Sieur George is going to the war in Mexico!

" Ah!" says a little girl in the throng, " 'Sieur George's two rooms will be empty; I find that very droll."

The landlord—this same Kookoo—is in the group. He hurls himself into the house and up the stairs. " Fifteen years pass since he have been in those room!" He arrives at the door—it is shut— " It is lock!"

In short, further investigation revealed that a youngish lady in

black, who had been seen by several neighbours to enter the house, but had not, of course, been suspected of such remarkable intentions, had, in company with a middle-aged slave-woman, taken these two rooms, and now, at the slightly-opened door, proffered a month's rent in advance. What could a landlord do but smile? Yet there was a pretext left: "the rooms must need repairs?"—"No, sir; he could look in and see." Joy! he looked in. All was neatness. The floor unbroken, the walls cracked but a little, and the cracks closed with new plaster, no doubt by the jealous hand of 'Sieur George himself. Kookoo's eyes swept sharply round the two apartments. The furniture was all there. Moreover, there was Monsieur's little hair-trunk. He should not soon forget that trunk. One day, fifteen years or more before, he had taken hold of that trunk to assist Monsieur to arrange his apartment, and Monsieur had drawn his fist back and cried to him to "drop it!" *Mais!* there it was, looking very suspicious in Kookoo's eyes, and the lady's domestic, as tidy as a yellow-bird, went and sat on it. Could that trunk contain treasure? It might, for Madame wanted to shut the door, and, in fact, did so.

The lady was quite handsome—had been more so, but was still young—spoke the beautiful language, and kept, in the inner room, her discreet and taciturn mulattress, a tall, straight woman, with a fierce eye, but called by the young Creoles of the neighbourhood "confound good-lookin'."

Among *les Américaines*, where the new neighbour always expects to be called upon by the older residents, this lady might have made friends in spite of being as reserved as 'Sieur George; but the reverse being the Creole custom, and she being well pleased to keep her own company, chose mystery rather than society.

The poor landlord was sorely troubled; it must not that anything *de trop* take place in his house. He watched the two rooms narrowly, but without result, save to find that Madame plied her needle for pay, spent her money for little else besides harp-strings, and took good care of the little trunk of Monsieur. This espionage was a good turn to the mistress and maid, for when Kookoo announced that all was proper, no more was said by outsiders. Their landlord never got but one question answered by the middle-aged maid—

"Madame, he feared, was a litt' bit embarrass' *pour* money, eh?"

"Non; Mademoiselle [Mademoiselle, you notice!] had some property, but did not want to eat it up."

Sometimes lady friends came, in very elegant private carriages, to see her, and one or two seemed to beg her—but in vain—to go away with them; but these gradually dropped off, until lady and servant were alone in the world. And so years, and the Mexican war, went by.

The volunteers came home; peace reigned, and the city went on spreading up and down the land; but 'Sieur George did not return. It overran the country like cocoa-grass. Fields, roads, woodlands, that were once 'Sieur George's places of retreat from mankind, were covered all over with little one-story houses in the "Old Third," and fine residences and gardens up in "Lafayette." Streets went slicing, like a butcher's knife, through old colonial estates, whose first masters never dreamed of the city reaching them—and 'Sieur George was still away. The four-story brick got old and ugly, and the surroundings dim and dreamy. Theatres, processions, dry goods stores, government establishments, banks, hotels, and all spirit of enterprise were gone to Canal Street and beyond, and the very beggars were gone with them. The little trunk got very old and bald, and still its owner lingered; still the lady, somewhat the worse for lapse of time, looked from the balcony window in the brief southern twilights, and the maid every morning shook a worn rug or two over the dangerous-looking railing; and yet neither had made friends or enemies.

The two rooms, from having been stingily kept at first, were needing repairs half the time, and the occupants were often moving, now into one, now back into the other; yet the hair-trunk was seen only by glimpses, the landlord, to his infinite chagrin, always being a little too late in offering his services, the women, whether it was light or heavy, having already moved it. He thought it significant.

Late one day of a most bitter winter—that season when, to the ecstatic amazement of a whole cityful of children, snow covered the streets ankle deep—there came a soft tap on the corridor door of this pair of rooms. The lady opened it, and beheld a tall, lank, iron-grey man, a total stranger, standing behind—Monsieur George! Both men were weather-beaten, scarred, and tattered. Across 'Sieur George's crown, leaving a long, bare streak through his white hair, was the souvenir of a Mexican sabre.

The landlord had accompanied them to the door: it was a magnificent opportunity. Mademoiselle asked them all in and tried to furnish a seat to each; but failing, 'Sieur George went straight across the

room and *sat on the hair-trunk.* The action was so conspicuous, the landlord laid it up in his penetrative mind.

'Sieur George was quiet, or, as it appeared, quieted. The mulattress stood near him, and to her he addressed, in an undertone, most of the little he said, leaving Mademoiselle to his companion. The stranger was a warm talker, and seemed to please the lady from the first; but if he pleased nothing else did. Kookoo, intensely curious, sought some pretext for staying, but found none. They were, altogether, an uncongenial company. The lady seemed to think Kookoo had no business there; 'Sieur George seemed to think the same concerning his companion; and the few words between Mademoiselle and 'Sieur George were cool enough. The maid appeared nearly satisfied, but could not avoid casting an anxious eye at times upon her mistress. Naturally the visit was short.

The next day but one the two gentlemen came again in better attire. 'Sieur George evidently disliked his companion, yet would not rid himself of him. The stranger was a gesticulating, stagy fellow, much Monsieur's junior, an incessant talker in Creole-French, always excited on small matters and unable to appreciate a great one. Once, as they were leaving, Kookoo—accidents will happen—was under the stairs. As they began to descend the tall man was speaking: "—better to bury it," the startled landlord heard him say, and held his breath, thinking of the trunk; but no more was uttered.

A week later they came again.

A week later they came again.

A week later they came yet again!

The landlord's eyes began to open. There must be a courtship in progress. It was very plain now why 'Sieur George had wished not to be accompanied by the tall gentleman; but since his visits had become regular and frequent, it was equally plain why he did not get rid of him; because it would not look well to be going and coming too often alone. Maybe it was only this tender passion that the tall man had thought "better to bury." Lately there often came sounds of gay conversation from the first of the two rooms, which had been turned into a parlour; and as, week after week, the friends came downstairs, the tall man was always in high spirits and anxious to embrace 'Sieur George, who—"sly dog," thought the landlord—would try to look grave, and only smiled in an embarrassed way. "Ah! Monsieur, you tink to be varry conning; *mais* you not so conning as Kookoo,

no " ; and the inquisitive little man would shake his head and smile, and shake his head again, as a man has a perfect right to do under the conviction that he has been for twenty years baffled by a riddle and is learning to read it at last ; he had guessed what was in 'Sieur George's head—he would by-and-by guess what was in his trunk.

A few months passed quickly away, and it became apparent to every eye in or about the ancient mansion that the landlord's guess was not so bad ; in fact, that Mademoiselle was to be married.

On a certain rainy spring afternoon a single hired hack drove up to the main entrance of the old house, and after some little bustle and the gathering of a crowd of damp children about the big doorway, 'Sieur George, muffled in a newly-repaired overcoat, jumped out and went upstairs. A moment later he reappeared, leading Mademoiselle, wreathed and veiled, down the stairway. Very fair was Mademoiselle still. Her beauty was mature—fully ripe—maybe a little too much so, but only a little ; and as she came down with the ravishing odour of bridal flowers floating about her, she seemed the garlanded victim of a pagan sacrifice. The mulattress in holiday gear followed behind.

The landlord owed a duty to the community. He arrested the maid on the last step : " Your mistress, she goin' *pour marier* 'Sieur George ? It make me glad, glad, glad ! "

" Marry 'Sieur George ? Non, Monsieur."

" Non ? Not marrie 'Sieur George ? *Mais comment ?* "

" She's going to marry the tall gentleman."

" *Diable !* ze long gentyman ! "—With his hands upon his forehead, he watched the carriage trundle away. It passed out of sight through the rain ; he turned to enter the house, and all at once tottered under the weight of a tremendous thought—they had left the trunk ! He hurled himself upstairs as he had done seven years before, but again—" Ah, bah ! ! "—the door was locked, and not a picayune of rent due.

Late that night a small square man, in a wet overcoat, fumbled his way into the damp entrance of the house, stumbled up the cracking stairs, unlocked, after many languid efforts, the door of the two rooms, and falling over the hair-trunk, slept until the morning sunbeams climbed over the balcony and in at the window, and shone full on the back of his head. Old Kookoo, passing the door just then, was surprised to find it slightly ajar—pushed it open silently, and saw, within, 'Sieur George in the act of rising from his knees beside the mysterious

trunk! He had come back to be once more the tenant of the two rooms.

'Sieur George, for the second time, was a changed man—changed from bad to worse; from being retired and reticent, he had come, by reason of advancing years, or mayhap that which had left the terrible scar on his face, to be garrulous. When, once in a while, employment sought him (for he never sought employment), whatever remuneration he received went its way for something that left him dingy and threadbare. He now made a lively acquaintance with his landlord, as, indeed, with every soul in the neighbourhood, and told all his adventures in Mexican prisons and Cuban cities; including full details of the hardships and perils experienced jointly with the "long gentleman" who had married Mademoiselle, and who was no Mexican or Cuban, but a genuine Louisianian.

"It was he that fancied me," he said, "not I him; but once he had fallen in love with me I hadn't the force to cast him off. How Madame ever should have liked him was one of those woman's freaks that a man mustn't expect to understand. He was no more fit for her than rags are fit for a queen; and I could have choked his head off the night he hugged me round the neck and told me what a suicide she had committed. But other fine women are committing that same folly every day, only they don't wait until they're thirty-four or five to do it.—'Why don't I like him?' Well, for one reason, he's a drunkard!" Here Kookoo, whose imperfect knowledge of English prevented his intelligent reception of the story, would laugh as if the joke came in just at this point.

However, with all Monsieur's prattle, he never dropped a word about the man he had been before he went away; and the great hair-trunk puzzle was still the same puzzle, growing greater every day.

Thus the two rooms had been the scene of some events quite queer, if not really strange; but the queerest that ever they presented, I guess, was 'Sieur George coming in there one day, crying like a little child, and bearing in his arms an infant—a girl—the lovely offspring of the drunkard whom he so detested, and poor, robbed, spirit-broken and now dead Madame. He took good care of the orphan, for orphan she was very soon. The long gentleman was pulled out of the Old Basin one morning, and 'Sieur George identified the body at the Trème station. He never hired a nurse—the father had sold the lady's maid quite out of sight; so he brought her through all the little ills and

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around all the sharp corners of baby life and childhood, without a human hand to help him, until one evening, having persistently shut his eyes to it for weeks and months, like one trying to sleep in the sunshine, he awoke to the realisation that she was a woman. It was a smoky one in November, the first cool day of autumn. The sunset was dimmed by the smoke of burning prairies, the air was full of the ashes of grass and reeds, ragged urchins were lugging home sticks of cordwood, and when a bit of coal fell from a cart in front of Kookoo's old house, a child was boxed half across the street and robbed of the booty by a *blanchisseuse de fin* from over the way.

The old man came home quite steady. He mounted the stairs smartly without stopping to rest, went with a step unusually light and quiet to his chamber, and sat by the window opening upon the rusty balcony.

It was a small room, sadly changed from what it had been in old times; but then so was 'Sieur George. Close and dark it was, the walls stained with dampness and the ceiling full of bald places that showed the lathing. The furniture was cheap and meagre, including conspicuously the small, curious-looking hair-trunk. The floor was of white slabs fastened down with spikes, and sloping up and down in one or two broad undulations, as if they had drifted far enough down the current of time to feel the tide-swell.

However, the floor was clean, the bed well made, the cypress table in place, and the musty smell of the walls partly neutralised by a geranium on the window-sill.

He so coming in and sitting down, an unseen person called from the room adjoining (of which, also, he was still the rentee) to know if he were he, and being answered in the affirmative, said, " Papa George, guess who was here to-day ? "

" Kookoo, for the rent ? "

" Yes, but he will not come back."

" No ? why not ? "

" Because you will not pay him."

" No ? and why not ? "

" Because I have paid him."

" Impossible ! where did you get the money ? "

" Cannot guess ?—Mother Nativity."

" What, not for embroidery ? "

" No ? and why not ? *Mais oui !* "—saying which, and with a

pleasant laugh, the speaker entered the room. She was a girl of sixteen or thereabout, very beautiful, with very black hair and eyes. A face and form more entirely out of place you could not have found in the whole city. She sat herself at his feet, and, with her interlocked hands upon his knee, and her face, full of childish innocence mingled with womanly wisdom, turned to his, appeared for a time to take principal part in a conversation which, of course, could not be overheard in the corridor outside.

Whatever was said, she presently rose, he opened his arms, and she sat on his knee and kissed him. This done, there was a silence, both smiling pensively and gazing out over the rotten balcony into the street. After a while she started up, saying something about the change of weather, and, slipping away, thrust a match between the bars of the grate. The old man turned about to the fire, and she from her little room brought a low sewing-chair and sat beside him, laying her head on his knee, and he stroking her brow with his brown palm.

And then, in an altered—a low, sad tone—he began a monotonous recital.

Thus they sat, he talking very steadily and she listening, until all the neighbourhood was wrapped in slumber—all the neighbours, but not Kookoo.

Kookoo in his old age had become a great eavesdropper ; his ear and eye took turns at the keyhole that night, for he tells things that were not intended for outside hearers. He heard the girl sobbing, and the old man saying, " But you must go now. You cannot stay with me safely or decently, much as I wish it. The Lord only knows how I'm to bear it, or where you're to go ; but He's your Lord, child, and He'll make a place for you. I was your grandfather's death ; I frittered your poor, dead mother's fortune away : let that be the last damage I do.

" I have always meant everything for the best," he added, half in soliloquy.

From all Kookoo could gather, he must have been telling her the very story just recounted. She had dropped quite to the floor, hiding her face in her hands, and was saying between her sobs, " I cannot go, Papa George ; oh, Papa George, I cannot go ! "

Just then 'Sieur George, having kept a good resolution all day, was encouraged by the orphan's pitiful tones to contemplate the most

senseless act he ever attempted to commit. He said to the sobbing girl that she was not of his blood; that she was nothing to him by natural ties; that his covenant was with her grandsire to care for his offspring; and though it had been poorly kept, it might be breaking it worse than ever to turn her out upon ever so kind a world.

"I have tried to be good to you all these years. When I took you, a wee little baby, I took you for better or worse. I intended to do well by you all your childhood days, and to do best at last. I thought surely we should be living well by this time, and you could choose from a world full of homes and a world full of friends.

"I don't see how I missed it!" Here he paused a moment in meditation, and presently resumed with some suddenness—

"I thought that education, far better than Mother Nativity has given you, should have afforded your sweet charms a noble setting; that good mothers and sisters would be wanting to count you into their families, and that the blossom of a happy womanhood would open perfect and full of sweetness.

"I would have given my life for it. I did give it, such as it was; but it was a very poor concern, I know—my life—and not enough to buy any good thing.

"I have had a thought of something, but I'm afraid to tell it. It didn't come to me to-day or yesterday; it has beset me a long time—for months."

The girl gazed into the embers, listening intensely.

"And oh! dearie, if I could only get you to think the same way, you might stay with me then."

"How long?" she asked, without stirring.

"Oh, as long as heaven should let us. But there is only one chance," he said, as it were feeling his way, "only one way for us to stay together. Do you understand me?"

She looked up at the old man with a glance of painful inquiry.

"If you could be—my wife, dearie!"

She uttered a low, distressful cry, and, gliding swiftly into her room, for the first time in her young life turned the key between them.

And the old man sat and wept.

Then Kookoo, peering through the keyhole, saw that they had been looking into the little trunk. The lid was up, but the back was toward the door, and he could see no more than if it had been closed.

He stooped and stared into the aperture until his dry old knees were ready to crack. It seemed as if 'Sieur George was stone, only stone couldn't weep like that.

Every separate bone in his neck was hot with pain. He would have given ten dollars—ten sweet dollars !—to have seen 'Sieur George get up and turn that trunk around.

There ! 'Sieur George rose up—what a face !

He started toward the bed, and as he came to the trunk he paused, looked at it, muttered something about " ruin," and something about " fortune," kicked the lid down, and threw himself across the bed.

Small profit to old Kookoo that he went to his own couch ; sleep was not for the little landlord. For well-nigh half a century he had suspected his tenant of having a treasure hidden in his house, and to-night he had heard his own admission that in the little trunk was a fortune. Kookoo had never felt so poor in all his days before. He felt a Creole's anger, too, that a tenant should be the holder of wealth while his landlord suffered poverty.

And he knew very well, too, did Kookoo, what the tenant would do. If he did not know what he kept in the trunk, he knew what he kept behind it, and he knew he would take enough of it to-night to make him sleep soundly.

No one would ever have supposed Kookoo capable of a crime He was too fearfully impressed with the extra-hazardous risks of dishonesty ; he was old, too, and weak, and, besides all, intensely a coward. Nevertheless, while it was yet two or three hours before daybreak, the sleep-forsaken little man arose, shuffled into his garments, and in his stocking-feet sought the corridor leading to 'Sieur George's apartment. The night, as it often does in that region, had grown warm and clear ; the stars were sparkling like diamonds pendent in the deep blue heavens, and at every window and lattice and cranny the broad, bright moon poured down its glittering beams upon the hoary-headed thief, as he crept along the mouldering galleries and down the ancient corridor that led to 'Sieur George's chamber.

'Sieur George's door, though ever so slowly opened, protested with a loud creak. The landlord, wet with cold sweat from head to foot, and shaking till the floor trembled, paused for several minutes, and then entered the moonlit apartment. The tenant, lying as if he had not moved, was sleeping heavily. And now the poor coward trembled so, that to kneel before the trunk, without falling, he did not know

how. Twice, thrice, he was near tumbling headlong. He became as cold as ice. But the sleeper stirred, and the thought of losing his opportunity strung his nerves up in an instant. He went softly down upon his knees, laid his hands upon the lid, lifted it, and let in the intense moonlight. The trunk was full, full, crowded down and running over full, of the tickets of the Havana Lottery!

A little after daybreak, Kookoo from his window saw the orphan, pausing on the corner. She stood for a moment, and then dove into the dense fog which had floated in from the river, and disappeared He never saw her again.

But her Lord is taking care of her. Once only she has seen 'Sieur George. She had been in the belvedere of the house which she now calls home, looking down upon the outspread city. Far away southward and westward the great river glistened in the sunset. Along its sweeping bends the chimneys of a smoking commerce, the magazines of surplus wealth, the gardens of the opulent, the steeples of a hundred sanctuaries and thousands on thousands of mansions and hovels covered the fertile birthright arpents which 'Sieur George, in his fifty years' stay, had seen tricked away from dull colonial Esaus by their blue-eyed brethren of the North. Nearer by she looked upon the forlornly silent region of lowly dwellings, neglected by legislation and shunned by all lovers of comfort, that once had been the smiling fields of her own grandsire's broad plantation; and but a little way off, trudging across the marshy commons, her eye caught sight of 'Sieur George following the sunset out upon the prairies to find a night's rest in the high grass.

She turned at once, gathered the skirt of her pink calico uniform, and, watching her steps through her tears, descended the steep winding stair to her frequent kneeling-place under the fragrant candles of the chapel altar in Mother Nativity's asylum.

'Sieur George is houseless. He cannot find the orphan. Mother Nativity seems to know nothing of her. If he could find her now, and could get from her the use of ten dollars for but three days, he knows a combination which would repair all the past; it could not fail, he—thinks. But he cannot find her, and the letters he writes—all containing the one scheme—disappear in the mail-box, and there's an end.

"POSSON JONE'"

GEORGE W. CABLE

TO Jules St.-Ange—elegant little heathen—there yet remained at manhood a remembrance of having been to school, and of having been taught by a stony-headed Capuchin that the world is round—for example, like a cheese. This round world is a cheese to be eaten through, and Jules had nibbled quite into his cheese world already at twenty-two.

He realized this as he idled about one Sunday morning where the intersection of Royal and Conti streets some seventy years ago formed a central corner of New Orleans. Yes, yes, the trouble was he had been wasteful and honest. He discussed the matter with that faithful friend and confidant, Baptiste, his yellow body-servant. They concluded that, papa's patience and *tante's* pin-money having been gnawed away quite to the rind, there were left open only these few easily enumerated resorts: to go to work—they shuddered; to join Major Innerarity's filibustering expedition; or else—why not?—to try some games of confidence. At twenty-two one must begin to be something. Nothing else tempted; could that avail? One could but try. It is noble to try; and, besides, they were hungry. If one could "make the friendship" of some person from the country, for instance, with money, not expert at cards or dice, but, as one would say, willing to learn, one might find cause to say some "Hail Marys."

The sun broke through a clearing sky, and Baptiste pronounced it good for luck. There had been a hurricane in the night. The weed-grown tile roofs were still dripping, and from lofty brick and low adobe walls a rising steam responded to the summer sunlight. Upstreet, and across the Rue du Canal, one could get glimpses of the gardens in Faubourg Ste. Marie standing in silent wretchedness, so many tearful Lucretias, tattered victims of the storm. Short remnants of the wind now and then came down the narrow street in erratic puffs heavily laden with odours of broken boughs and torn flowers, skimmed the little pools of rain-water in the deep ruts of the unpaved

street, and suddenly went away to nothing, like a juggler's butterflies or a young man's money.

It was very picturesque, the Rue Royale. The rich and poor met together. The locksmith's swinging key creaked next door to the bank; across the way, crouching, mendicant-like, in the shadow of a great importing house, was the mud laboratory of the mender of broken combs. Light balconies overhung the rows of showy shops and stores open for trade this Sunday morning, and pretty Latin faces of the higher class glanced over their savagely-pronged railings upon the passers below. At some windows hung lace curtains, flannel duds at some, and at others only the scraping and sighing one-hinged shutter groaning toward Paris after its neglectful master.

M. St.-Ange stood looking up and down the street for nearly an hour. But few ladies, only the inveterate mass-goers, were out. About the entrance of the frequent *cafés* the masculine gentility stood leaning on canes, with which now one and now another beckoned to Jules, some even adding pantomimic hints of the social cup.

M. St.-Ange remarked to his servant without turning his head that somehow he felt sure he should soon return those *bons* that the mulatto had lent him.

"What will you do with them?"

"Me!" said Baptiste quickly; "I will go and see the bull-fight in the Place Congo."

"There is to be a bull-fight? But where is M. Cayetano?"

"Ah, got all his affairs wet in the tornado. Instead of his circus, they are to have a bull-fight—not an ordinary bull-fight with sick horses, but a buffalo and tiger fight. I would not miss it——"

Two or three persons ran to the opposite corner, and commenced striking at something with their canes. Others followed. Can M. St.-Ange and servant, who hasten forward—can the Creoles, Cubans, Spaniards, San Domingo refugees, and other loungers—can they hope it is a fight? They hurry forward. Is a man in a fit? The crowd pours in from the side streets. Have they killed a so-long snake? Bareheaded shopmen leave their wives, who stand upon chairs. The crowd huddles and packs. Those on the outside make little leaps into the air, trying to be tall.

"What is the matter?"

"Have they caught a real live rat?"

"Who is hurt?" asks some one in English.

"*Personne,*" replies a shopkeeper; "a man's hat blow' in the gutter; but he has it now. Jules pick' it. See, that is the man, head and shoulders on top the res'."

"He in the homespun?" asks a second shopkeeper. "Humph! an *Américain*—a West Floridian; bah!"

"But wait; 'st! he is speaking; listen!"

"To who is he speak——"

"Sh-sh-sh! to Jules."

"Jules who?"

"Silence, you! To Jules St.-Ange, what howe me a bill since long time. Sh-sh-sh!"

Then the voice was heard.

Its owner was a man of giant stature, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, as if he was making a constant, good-natured attempt to accommodate himself to ordinary doors and ceilings. His bones were those of an ox. His face was marked more by weather than age, and his narrow brow was bald and smooth. He had instantaneously formed an opinion of Jules St.-Ange, and the multitude of words, most of them lingual curiosities, with which he was rasping the wide-open ears of his listeners, signified, in short, that, as sure as his name was Parson Jones, the little Creole was a "plum gentleman."

M. St.-Ange bowed and smiled, and was about to call attention, by both gesture and speech, to a singular object on top of the still uncovered head, when the nervous motion of the *Américain* anticipated him, as, throwing up an immense hand, he drew down a large roll of bank-notes. The crowd laughed, the West Floridian joining, and began to disperse.

"Why, that money belong to Smyrny Church," said the giant.

"You are very dengerous to make your money expose like that, Misty Posson Jone'," said St.-Ange, counting it with his eyes.

The countryman gave a start and smile of surprise.

"How d'dyou know my name was Jones?" he asked; but without pausing for the Creole's answer, furnished in his reckless way some further specimens of West-Floridian English; and the conciseness with which he presented full intelligence of his home, family, calling, lodging-house, and present and future plans, might have passed for consummate art, had it not been the most run-wild nature. "And I've done been to Mobile, you know, on busi*ness* for Bethesdy Church. It's the on'yest time I ever been from home; now you wouldn't of believed that, would you? But I admire to

have saw you, that's so. You've got to come and eat with me. Me and my boy ain't been fed yit. What might one call yo' name? Jools? Come on, Jools. Come on, Colossus. That's my niggah—his name's Colossus of Rhodes. Is that yo' yallah boy, Jools? Fetch him along, Colossus. It seems like a special prov*idence*.—Jools, do you believe in a special prov*idence*?"

Jules said he did.

The new-made friends moved briskly off, followed by Baptiste and a short, square, old negro, very black and grotesque, who had introduced himself to the mulatto, with many glittering and cavernous smiles, as "d'body sarvant of d'Rev'n' Mr. Jones."

Both pairs enlivened their walk with conversation. Parson Jones descanted upon the doctrine he had mentioned, as illustrated in the perplexities of cotton-growing, and concluded that there would always be "a special prov*idence* again' cotton untell folks quits a pressin' of it and haulin' of it on Sundays!"

"*Je dis*," said St.-Ange, in response, "I thing you is juz right. I believe, me, strong-strong in the improvidence, yes. You know my papa he hown a sugah plantation, you know. 'Jules, me son,' he say one time to me, 'I goin' to make one baril sugah to fedge the moze high price in New Orleans.' Well, he take his bez baril sugah—I nevah see a so careful man like me papa always to make a so beautiful sugah *et sirop*. 'Jules, go at Father Pierre an' ged this lill pitcher fill with holy water, an' tell him sen' his tin bucket, and I will make it fill with *quitte*.' I ged the holy water; my papa sprinkle it over the baril, an' make one cross on the 'ead of the baril."

"Why, Jools," said Parson Jones, "that didn't do no good."

"Din do no good! Id broughd the so great value! You can strike me dead if thad baril sugah din fedge the more high cost than any other in the city. *Parceque*, the man what buy that baril sugah he make a mistake of one hundred pound"—falling back—"*mais* certainlee!"

"And you think that was growin' out of the holy water?" asked the parson.

"*Mais*, what could make it else? Id not be the *quitte*, because my papa keep the bucket, an' forget to sen' the *quitte* to Father Pierre."

Parson Jones was disappointed.

"Well, now, Jools, you know, I don't think that was right. I reckon you must be a plum Catholic."

M. St.-Ange shrugged. He would not deny his faith.

"I am a *Catholique, mais*"—brightening as he hoped to recommend himself anew—"not a good one."

"Well, you know," said Jones—"where's Colossus? Oh! all right. Colossus strayed off a minute in Mobile, and I plum lost him for two days. Here's the place; come in. Colossus and this boy can go to the kitchen.—Now, Colossus, what *air* you a beckonin' at me faw?"

He let his servant draw him aside and address him in a whisper.

"Oh, go' way!" said the parson, with a jerk. "Who's goin' to throw me? What? Speak louder. Why, Colossus, you shayn't talk so, saw. 'Pon my soul, you're the mightiest fool I ever taken up with. Jest you go down that alleyway with this yalla boy, and don't show yo' face untell yo' called!"

The negro begged; the master wrathily insisted.

"Colossus, will you do ez I tell you, or shell I hev' to strike you, saw?"

"O Mahs Jimmy, I—I's gwine; but"—he ventured nearer—"don't on no account drink nothin', Mahs Jimmy."

Such was the negro's earnestness that he put one foot in the gutter, and fell heavily against his master. The parson threw him off angrily.

"Thar, now! Why, Colossus, you most of been dosted with sumthin'; yo' plum crazy.—Humph, come on, Jools, let's eat! Humph! to tell me that when I never taken a drop, exceptin' for chills, in my life—which he knows so as well as me!"

The two masters began to ascend a stair.

"*Mais*, he is a sassy; I would sell him, me," said the young Creole.

"No, I wouldn't do that," replied the parson; "though there is people in Bethesdy who says he is a rascal. He's a powerful smart fool. Why, that boy's got money, Jools; more money than religion, I reckon. I'm shore he fallen into mighty bad company"—they passed beyond earshot.

Baptiste and Colossus, instead of going to the tavern kitchen, passed to the next door and entered the dark rear corner of a low grocery, where, the law notwithstanding, liquor was covertly sold to slaves. There, in the quiet company of Baptiste and the grocer, the colloquial powers of Colossus, which were simply prodigious, began very soon to show themselves.

"For whilst," said he, "Mahs Jimmy has eddication, you know—

whilst he has eddication, I has 'scretion. He has eddication and I has 'scretion, an' so we gits along."

He drew a black bottle down the counter, and, laying half his length upon the damp board, continued:

"As a p'inciple I discredits de imbimin' of awjus liquors. De imbimin' of awjus liquors, de wiolution of de Sabbaf, de playin' of de fiddle, and de usin' of bywords, dey is de fo' sins of de conscience; an' if any man sins de fo' sins of de conscience, de debble done sharp his fork fo' dat man. Ain't that so, boss?"

The grocer was sure it was so.

"Neberdeless, mind you"—here the orator brimmed his glass from the bottle and swallowed the contents with a dry eye—"mind you, a roytious man, sech as ministers of de gospel and dere body sarvants, can take a *leetle* for de weak stomach."

But the fascinations of Colossus' eloquence must not mislead us; this is the story of a true Christian, to wit, Parson Jones.

The parson and his new friend ate. But the coffee M. St.-Ange declared he could not touch; it was too wretchedly bad. At the French Market, near by, there was some noble coffee. This, however, would have to be bought, and Parson Jones had scruples.

"You see, Jools, every man has his conscience to guide him, which it does so in——"

"Oh yes!" cried St.-Ange, "conscien'; thad is the bez, Posson Jone'. Certainlee! I am a *Catholique*, you is a *schismatique*; you thing it is wrong to dring some coffee—well, then, it *is* wrong; you thing it is wrong to make the sugah to ged the so large price—well, then, it *is* wrong; I think it is right—well, then, it *is* right; it is all 'abit; *c'est tout*. What a man thing is right, *is right*; 'tis all 'abit. A man muz nod go again' his conscien'. My faith! do you thing I would go again' my conscien'? *Mais allons*, led us go and ged some coffee."

"Jools."

"W'at?"

"Jools, it ain' the drinkin' of coffee, but the buyin' of it on a Sabbath. You must really excuse me, Jools, it's again' conscience, you know."

"Ah!" said St.-Ange, "*c'est* very true. For you it would be a sin, *mais* for me it is only 'abit. Rilligion is a very strange; I know a man one time, he thing it was wrong to go to cockfight Sunday evening. I thing it is all 'abit. *Mais*, come, Posson Jone'; I have got one friend,

Miguel; led us go at his house and ged some coffee. Come; Miguel have no familie; only him and Joe—always like to see friend; *allons*, led us come yonder."

"Why, Jools, my dear friend, you know," said the shame-faced parson, "I never visit on Sundays."

"Never w'at?" asked the astounded Creole.

"No," said Jones, smiling awkwardly.

"Never visite?"

"Exceptin' sometimes amongst church members," said Parson Jones.

"*Mais*," said the seductive St.-Ange, "Miguel and Joe is church member'—certainlee! They love to talk about rilligion. Come at Miguel and talk about some rilligion. I am nearly expire for me coffee."

Parson Jones took his hat from beneath his chair and rose up.

"Jools," said the weak giant, "I ought to be in church right now."

"*Mais*, the church is right yonder at Miguel', yes. Ah!" continued St.-Ange, as they descended the stairs, "I thing every man muz have the rilligion he like' the bez—me, I like the *Catholique* rilligion the bez—for me it *is* the bez. Every man will sure go to heaven if he like his rilligion the bez."

"Jools," said the West Floridian, laying his great hand tenderly upon the Creole's shoulder, as they stepped out upon the *banquette*, "do you think you have any shore hopes of heaven?"

"Yass!" replied St.-Ange; "I am sure-sure. I thing everybody will go to heaven. I thing you will go, *et* I thing Miguel will go, *et* Joe—everybody, I thing—*mais*, hof course, not if they not have been christen'. Even I thing some niggers will go."

"Jools," said the parson, stopping in his walk—"Jools, I *don't* want to lose my niggah."

"You will not loose him. With Baptiste he *cannot* ged loose."

But Colossus' master was not reassured.

"Now," said he, still tarrying, "this is jest the way; had I of gone to church——"

"Posson Jone'," said Jules.

"What?"

"I tell you. We goin' to church!"

"Will you?" asked Jones joyously.

"*Allons*, come along," said Jules, taking his elbow.

They walked down the Rue Chartres, passed several corners, and by and by turned into a cross street. The parson stopped an instant as they were turning, and looked back up the street.

"W'at you lookin'?" asked his companion.

"I thought I saw Colossus," answered the parson, with an anxious face; "I reckon 'twan't him, though." And they went on.

The street they now entered was a very quiet one. The eye of any chance passer would have been at once drawn to a broad, heavy, white brick edifice on the lower side of the way, with a flag-pole standing out like a bowsprit from one of its great windows, and a pair of lamps hanging before a large closed entrance. It was a theater, honeycombed with gambling dens. At this morning hour all was still, and the only sign of life was a knot of little barefoot girls gathered within its narrow shade, and each carrying an infant relative. Into this place the parson and M. St.-Ange entered, the little nurses jumping up from the sills to let them pass in.

A half-hour may have passed. At the end of that time the whole juvenile company were laying alternate eyes and ears to the chinks, to gather what they could of an interesting quarrel going on within.

"I did not, saw! I given you no cause of offense, saw! It's not so, saw! Mister Jools simply mistaken the house, thinkin' it was a Sabbath school! No such thing, saw; I *ain't* bound to bet! Yes, I kin git out! Yes, without bettin'! I hev a right to my opinion; I reckon I'm a *white man*, saw! No, saw! I on'y said I didn't think you could get the game on them cards. 'Sno such thing, saw! I do *not* know how to play! I wouldn't hev a rascal's money ef I should win it! Shoot, ef you dare! You can kill me, but you cayn't scare me! No, I shayn't bet. I'll die first! Yes, saw; Mr. Jools can bet for me if he admires to; I ain't his mostah."

Here the speaker seemed to direct his words to St.-Ange.

"Saw, I don't understand you, saw. I never said I'd loan you money to bet for me. I didn't suspicion this from you, saw. No, I won't take any more lemonade; it's the most notorious stuff I ever drank, saw!"

M. St.-Ange's replies were in *falsetto* and not without effect; for presently the parson's indignation and anger began to melt. "Don't ask me, Jools, I can't help you. It's no use; it's a matter of conscience with me, Jools."

"*Mais oui!* 'tis a matt' of conscien' wid me, the same."

"But, Jools, the money's none o' mine, nohow; it belongs to Smyrny, you know."

"If I could make jus' *one* bet," said the persuasive St.-Ange, "I would leave this place, fas'-fas', yes. If I had thing—*mais* I did not soupspicion this from you, Posson Jone'——"

"Don't, Jools, don't!"

"No! Posson Jone'."

"You're bound to win?" said the parson, wavering.

"*Mais certainement!* But it is not to win that I want; 'tis me conscien'—me honor!"

"Well, Jools, I hope I'm not a doin' no wrong. I'll loan you some of this money if you say you'll come right out 'thout takin' your winnin's."

All was still. The peeping children could see the parson as he lifted his hand to his breast pocket. There it paused a moment in bewilderment, then plunged to the bottom. It came back empty, and fell lifelessly at his side. His head dropped upon his breast, his eyes were for a moment closed, his broad palms were lifted and pressed against his forehead, a tremor seized him, and he fell all in a lump to the floor. The children ran off with their infant loads, leaving Jules St.-Ange swearing by all his deceased relatives, first to Miguel and Joe, and then to the lifted parson, that he did not know what had become of the money "except if" the black man had got it.

In the rear of ancient New Orleans, beyond the sites of the old rampart, a trio of Spanish forts, where the town has since sprung up and grown old, green with all the luxuriance of the wild Creole summer, lay the Congo Plains. Here stretched the canvas of the historic Cayetano, who Sunday after Sunday sowed the sawdust for his circus ring.

But to-day the great showman had fallen short of his printed promise. The hurricane had come by night, and with one fell swash had made an irretrievable sop of everything. The circus trailed away its bedraggled magnificence, and the ring was cleared for the bull.

Then the sun seemed to come out and work for the people. "See," said the Spaniards, looking up at the glorious sky with its great, white fleets drawn off upon the horizon—"see—heaven smiles upon the bull-fight!"

In the high upper seats of the rude amphitheatre sat the gaily-

decked wives and daughters of the Gascons, from the *métaries* along the Ridge, and the chattering Spanish women of the Market, their shining hair unbonneted to the sun. Next below were their husbands and lovers in Sunday blouses, milkmen, butchers, bakers, black-bearded fishermen, Sicilian fruiterers, swarthy Portuguese sailors, in little woollen caps, and strangers of the graver sort; mariners of England, Germany, and Holland. The lowest seats were full of trappers, smugglers, Canadian *voyageurs*, drinking and singing; *Américains*, too—more's the shame—from the upper rivers—who will not keep their seats,—who ply the bottle, and who will get home by-and-by and tell how wicked Sodom is; broad-brimmed, silver-braided Mexicans, too, with their copper cheeks and bat's eyes, and their tinkling spurred heels. Yonder, in that quieter section, are the quadroon women in their black lace shawls—and there is Baptiste; and below them are the turbaned black women, and there is—but he vanishes—Colossus.

The afternoon is advancing, yet the sport, though loudly demanded, does not begin. The *Américains* grow derisive and find pastime in gibes and raillery. They mock the various Latins with their national inflections, and answer their scowls with laughter. Some of the more aggressive shout pretty French greetings to the women of Gascony, and one bargeman, amid peals of applause, stands on a seat and hurls a kiss to the quadroons. The mariners of England, Germany, and Holland, as spectators, like the fun, while the Spaniards look black and cast defiant imprecations upon their persecutors. Some Gascons, with timely caution, pick their women out and depart, running a terrible fire of gallantries.

In hope of truce, a new call is raised for the bull: "The bull, the bull!—hush!"

In a tier near the ground a man is standing and calling—standing head and shoulders above the rest—calling in the *Américaine* tongue. Another man, big and red, named Joe, and a handsome little Creole in elegant dress and full of laughter, wish to stop him, but the flat-boatmen, ha-ha-ing and cheering, will not suffer it. Ah, through some shameful knavery of the men, into whose hands he has fallen, he is drunk! Even the women can see that; and now he throws his arms wildly and raises his voice until the whole great circle hears it. He is preaching!

Ah! kind Lord, for a special providence now! The men of his

own nation—men from the land of the open English Bible and temperance cup and song are cheering him on to mad disgrace. And now another call for the appointed sport is drowned by the flatboatmen singing the ancient tune of Mear. You can hear the words—

"Old Grimes is dead, that good old soul"

—from ribald lips and throats turned brazen with laughter, from sinners who toss their hats aloft and roll in their seats; the chorus swells to the accompaniment of a thousand brogans—

"He used to wear an old gray coat
All buttoned down before."

A ribboned man in the arena is trying to be heard, and the Latins raise one mighty cry for silence. The big red man gets a hand over the parson's mouth, and the ribboned man seizes his moment.

"They have been endeavouring for hours," he says, "to draw the terrible animals from their dens, but such is their strength and fierceness that——"

His voice is drowned. Enough has been heard to warrant the inference that the beasts cannot be whipped out of the storm-drenched cages to which menagerie life and long starvation have attached them, and from the roar of indignation the man of ribbons flies. The noise increases. Men are standing up by hundreds, and women are imploring to be let out of the turmoil. All at once, like the bursting of a dam, the whole mass pours down into the ring. They sweep across the arena and over the showman's barriers. Miguel gets a frightful trampling. Who cares for gates or doors? They tear the beasts' houses bar from bar, and, laying hold of the gaunt buffalo, drag him forth by feet, ears, and tail; and in the midst of the *mêlée*, still head and shoulders above all, wilder, with the cup of the wicked, than any beast, is the man of God from the Florida parishes!

In his arms he bore—and all the people shouted at once when they saw it—the tiger. He had lifted it high up with its back to his breast, his arms clasped under its shoulders; the wretched brute had curled up caterpillar-wise, with its long tail against its belly, and through its filed teeth grinned a fixed and impotent wrath. And Parson Jones was shouting:

"The tiger and the buffler *shell* lay down together! You dah to say they shayn't, and I'll comb you with this varmint from head to foot! The tiger and the buffler *shell* lay down together. They

shell! Now, you, Joe! Behold! I am here to see it done. The lion and the buffler *shell* lay down together!"

Mouthing these words again and again, the parson forced his way through the surge in the wake of the buffalo. This creature the Latins had secured by a lariat over his head, and were dragging across the old rampart and into a street of the city.

The northern races were trying to prevent, and there was pommelling and knocking down, cursing and knife-drawing, until Jules St.-Ange was quite carried away with the fun, laughed, clapped his hands, and swore with delight, and ever kept close to the gallant parson.

Joe, contrariwise, counted all this child's play an interruption. He had come to find Colossus and the money. In an unlucky moment he made bold to lay hold of the parson, but a piece of the broken barriers in the hands of a flatboatman felled him to the sod, the terrible crowd swept over him, the lariat was cut, and the giant parson hurled the tiger upon the buffalo's back. In another instant both brutes were dead at the hands of the mob; Jones was lifted from his feet, and prating of Scripture and the millennium, of Paul at Ephesus and Daniel in the "buffler's" den, was borne aloft upon the shoulders of the huzzaing *Américains*. Half an hour later he was sleeping heavily on the floor of a cell in the *calaboza*.

When Parson Jones awoke, a bell was somewhere tolling for midnight. Somebody was at the door of his cell with a key. The lock grated, the door swung, the turnkey looked in and stepped back, and a ray of moonlight fell upon M. Jules St.-Ange. The prisoner sat upon the empty shackles and ringbolt in the centre of the floor.

"Misty Posson Jone'," said the visitor softly.

"O Jools!"

"*Mais*, w'at de matter, Posson Jone'?"

"My sins, Jools, my sins!"

"Ah! Posson Jone', is that something to cry, because a man get sometime a litt' bit intoxicate? *Mais*, if a man keep *all the time* intoxicate, I think that is again' the conscien'."

"Jools, Jools, your eyes is darkened—oh! Jools, where's my pore old niggah?"

"Posson Jone', never min'; he is wid Baptiste."

"Where?"

"I don' know w'ere—*mais* he is wid Baptiste. Baptiste is a beautiful to take care of somebody."

"Is he as good as you, Jools?" asked Parson Jones sincerely.

Jules was slightly staggered.

"You know, Posson Jone', you know, a nigger cannot be good as a w'ite man—*mais* Baptiste is a good nigger."

The parson moaned and dropped his chin into his hands.

"I was to of left for home to-morrow, sun-up, on the *Isabella* schooner. Pore Smyrny!" He deeply sighed.

"Posson Jone'," said Jules, leaning against the wall and smiling, "I swear you is the moz funny man I ever see. If I was you I would say, me, 'Ah! 'ow I am lucky! the money I los', it was not mine, anyhow!' My faith! shall a man make hisse'f to be the more sorry because the money he los' is not his? Me, I would say, 'It is a specious providence.'

"Ah! Misty Posson Jone'," he continued, "you make a so droll sermon ad the bull ring. Ha! ha! I swear I thing you can make money to preach thad sermon many time ad the theatre St. Philippe. Hah! you is the moz brave dat I never see, *mais* ad the same time the moz rilligious man. Where I'm goin' to fin' one priest to make like dat? *Mais*, why you can't cheer up an' be 'appy? Me, if I should be miserabl' like that I would kill meself."

The countryman only shook his head.

"*Bien*, Posson Jone', I have the so good news for you."

The prisoner looked up with eager inquiry.

"Las' evening when they lock' you, I come right off at M. De Blanc's house to get you let out of de calaboose; M. De Blanc he is the judge. So soon I was entering—'Ah! Jules, me boy, juz the man to make complete the game!' Posson Jone', it was a specious providence! I win in t'ree hours more dan six hundred dollah! Look." He produced a mass of bank notes, *bons*, and duebills.

"And you got the pass?" asked the parson, regarding the money with a sadness incomprehensible to Jules.

"It is here; it take the effect so soon the daylight."

"Jools, my friend, your kindness is in vain."

The Creole's face became a perfect blank.

"Because," said the parson, "for two reasons: firstly, I have broken the laws, and ought to stand the penalty; and secondly—you must really excuse me, Jools, you know, but the pass has been got onfairly, I'm afeerd. You told the judge I was innocent; and in neither case it don't become a Christian (which I hope I can still say I am one) to 'do evil that good may come.' I muss

stay." M. St.-Ange stood up aghast, and for a moment speechless, at this exhibition of moral heroism; but an artifice was presently hit upon. "*Mais*, Posson Jone'!"—in his old *falsetto*—"de order—you cannot read it, it is in French—compel you to go hout, sir!"

"Is that so?" cried the parson, bounding up with radiant face—"is that so, Jools?" The young man nodded, smiling; but, though he smiled, the fountain of his tenderness was opened. He made the sign of the cross as the parson knelt in prayer, and even whispered "Hail Mary," etc., quite through, twice over.

Morning broke in summer glory upon a cluster of villas behind the city, nestled under live oaks and magnolias on the banks of a deep bayou, and known as Suburb St. Jean.

With the first beam came the West Floridian and the Creole out upon the bank below the village. Upon the parson's arm hung a pair of antique saddlebags. Baptiste limped wearily behind; both his eyes were encircled with broad, blue rings, and one cheek bone bore the official impress of every knuckle of Colossus' left hand. The "beautiful to take care of somebody" had lost his charge. At mention of the negro he became wild, and, half in English, half in the "gumbo" dialect, said murderous things. Intimidated by Jules to calmness, he became able to speak confidently on one point: he could, would, and did swear that Colossus had gone home to the Florida parishes; he was almost certain; in fact, he thought so.

There was a clicking of pulleys as the three appeared upon the bayou's margin, and Baptiste pointed out, in the deep shadow of a great oak, the *Isabella*, moored among the bulrushes, and just spreading her sails for departure. Moving down to where she lay, the parson and his friend paused on the bank, loath to say farewell.

"O Jools!" said the parson, "supposin' Colossus ain't gone home! O Jools, if you'll look him out for me, I'll never forget you—I'll never forget you, nohow, Jools. No, Jools, I never will believe he taken that money. Yes, I know all niggahs will steal"—he set foot upon the gang plank—"but Colossus wouldn't steal from me. Good-by."

"Misty Posson Jone'," said St.-Ange, putting his hand on the parson's arm with genuine affection, "hol' on. You see dis money—w'at I win las' night? Well, I win it by a specious providence, ain't it?"

"There's no tellin'," said the humbled Jones. "Providence

Moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

"Ah!" cried the Creole, "*c'est* very true. I ged this money in

the mysterieuze way. *Mais*, if I keep dis money, you know where it goin' be to-night ? "

" I really can't say," replied the parson.

" Goin' to de dev'," said the sweetly smiling young man.

The schooner captain, leaning against the shrouds, and even Baptiste, laughed outright.

" O Jools, you mustn't ! "

" Well, den, w'at I shall do wid *it* ? "

" Anything ! " answered the parson ; " better donate it away to some poor man——"

" Ah ! Misty Posson Jone', dat is w'at I want. You los' five hondred dollar'—'twas me fault."

" No, it wa'n't, Jools."

" *Mais*, it was ! "

" No ! "

" It *was* me fault ! I *swear* it was me fault ! *Mais*, here is five hondred dollar' ; I wish you shall take it. Here ! I don't got no use for money.—Oh, my faith ! Posson Jone', you must not begin to cry some more."

Parson Jones was choked with tears. When he found voice he said :

" O Jools, Jools, Jools ! my pore, noble, dear, misguidened friend ! ef you hed of hed a Christian raisin' ! May the Lord show you your errors better'n I kin, and bless you for your good intentions—oh, no ! I cayn't touch that money with a ten-foot pole ; it wa'n't rightly got : you must really excuse me, my dear friend, but I cayn't touch it."

St.-Ange was petrified.

" Good-by, dear Jools," continued the parson. " I'm in the Lord's haynds, and he's very merciful, which I hope and trust you'll find it out. Good-by ! "—the schooner swung slowly off before the breeze—" good-by ! "

St.-Ange roused himself.

" Posson Jone' ! make me hany'ow *dis* promise : you never, never, *never* will come back to New Orleans."

" Ah, Jools, the Lord willin', I'll never leave home again ! "

" All right ! " cried the Creole ; " I thing he's willin'. Adieu, Posson Jone'. My faith ! you are the so fighting an' moz rilligious man as I never saw ! Adieu ! Adieu ! "

Baptiste uttered a cry and presently ran by his master toward the schooner, his hands full of clods.

St.-Ange looked just in time to see the sable form of Colossus of Rhodes emerge from the vessel's hold, and the pastor of Smyrna and Bethesda seize him in his embrace.

"O Colossus! you outlandish old nigger! Thank the Lord! Thank the Lord!"

The little Creole almost wept. He ran down the towpath, laughing and swearing, and making confused allusion to the entire *personnel* and furniture of the lower regions.

By odd fortune, at the moment that St.-Ange further demonstrated his delight by tripping his mulatto into a bog, the schooner came brushing along the reedy bank with a graceful curve, the sails flapped, and the crew fell to poling her slowly along.

Parson Jones was on the deck, kneeling once more in prayer. His hat had fallen before him; behind him knelt his slave. In thundering tones he was confessing himself "a plum fool," from whom "the conceit had been jolted out," and who had been made to see that even his "nigger had the longest head of the two."

Colossus clasped his hands and groaned.

The parson prayed for a contrite heart.

"Oh yes!" cried Colossus.

The master acknowledged countless mercies.

"Dat's so!" cried the slave.

The master prayed that they might still be "piled on."

"Glory!" cried the black man, clapping his hands; "pile on!"

"An' now," continued the parson, "bring this pore, back-slidin' jackace of a parson and this pore ole fool nigger back to thar home in peace!"

"Pray fo' de money!" called Colossus.

But the parson prayed for Jules.

"Pray fo' de *money*!" repeated the negro.

"And oh, give thy servant back that there lost money!"

Colossus rose stealthily, and tiptoed by his still shouting master. St.-Ange, the captain, the crew, gazed in silent wonder at the strategist. Pausing but an instant over the master's hat to grin an acknowledgment of his beholders' speechless interest, he softly placed in it the faithfully mourned and honestly prayed-for Smyrna fund; then, saluted by the gesticulative, silent applause of St.-Ange and the schooner men, he resumed his first attitude behind his roaring master.

"Amen!" cried Colossus, meaning to bring him to a close.

"Onworthy though I be——" cried Jones.

"*Amen!*" reiterated the negro.

"A-a-amen!" said Parson Jones.

He rose to his feet, and, stooping to take up his hat, beheld the well-known roll. As one stunned, he gazed for a moment upon his slave, who still knelt with clasped hands and rolling eyeballs; but when he became aware of the laughter and cheers that greeted him from both deck and shore, he lifted eyes and hands to heaven, and cried like the veriest babe. And when he looked at the roll again, and hugged and kissed it, St.-Ange tried to raise a second shout, but choked, and the crew fell to their poles.

And now up runs Baptiste, covered with slime, and prepares to cast his projectiles. The first one fell wide of the mark; the schooner swung round into a long reach of water, where the breeze was in her favour; another shout of laughter drowned the maledictions of the muddy man; the sails filled; Colossus of Rhodes, smiling and bowing as hero of the moment, ducked as the main boom swept round, and the schooner, leaning slightly to the pleasant influence, rustled a moment over the bulrushes, and then sped far away down the rippling bayou.

M. Jules St.-Ange stood long, gazing at the receding vessel as it now disappeared, now reappeared, beyond the tops of the high undergrowth; but when an arm of the forest hid it finally from sight he turned downward, followed by that fagged-out spaniel, his servant, saying, as he turned, "Baptiste."

"*Miché?*"

"You know w'at I goin' do wid dis money?"

"*Non, m'sieur.*"

"Well, you can strike me dead if I don't goin' to pay hall my debts! *Allons!*"

He began a merry little song to the effect that his sweetheart was a wine bottle, and master and man, leaving care behind, returned to the picturesque Rue Royale. The ways of Providence are indeed strange. In all Parson Jones' after life, amid the many painful reminiscences of his visit to the City of the Plain, the sweet knowledge was withheld from him that by the light of the Christian virtue that shone from him even in his great fall, Jules St.-Ange arose, and went to his father an honest man.

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS
1844–1911

LITTLE TOMMY TUCKER

THERE were but three persons in the car; a merchant, deep in the income list of the *Traveller*, an old lady with two band-boxes, a man in the corner with his hat pulled over his eyes.

Tommy opened the door, peeped in, hesitated, looked into another car, came back, gave his little fiddle a shove on his shoulder, and walked in.

"Hi! Little Tommy Tucker
Plays for his supper,"

shouted the young exquisite lounging on the platform in tan-coloured coat and lavender kid gloves.

"O Kids, you're there, are you? Well, I'd rather play for it than loaf for it, *I* had," said Tommy stoutly.

The merchant shot a careless glance over the top of his paper at the sound of this *petit dialogue*, and the old lady smiled benignly; the man in the corner neither looked nor smiled.

Nobody would have thought, to look at that man in the corner, that he was at that very moment deserting a wife and five children. Yet that is precisely what he was doing.

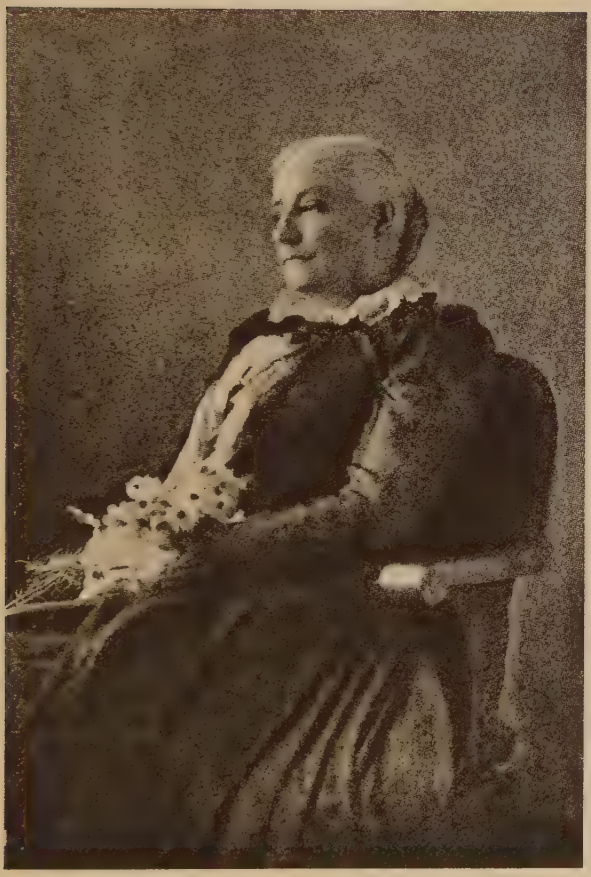
A villain? Oh no, that is not the word. A brute? Not by any means. A man, weak, unfortunate, discouraged, and selfish, as weak, unfortunate, and discouraged people are apt to be; that was the amount of it. His panoramas never paid him for the use of his halls. His travelling tin-type saloon had trundled him into a sheriff's hands. His petroleum speculations had crashed like a bubble. His black and gold sign, *F. Harmon, Photographer*, had swung now for nearly a year over the dentist's rooms, and he had had the patronage of precisely six old women and three babies. He had drifted to the theatre in the evenings, he did not care now to remember how many times—the fellows asked him, and it made him forget his troubles; the next morning his empty purse would gape at him, and Annie's mouth would quiver. A man must have his glass, too, on Sundays, and—well,

perhaps a little oftener. He had not always been fit to go to work after it; and Annie's mouth would quiver. It will be seen at once that it was exceedingly hard on a man that his wife's mouth should quiver. "Confound it! Why couldn't she scold or cry? These still women aggravated a fellow beyond reason."

Well, then the children had been sick; measles, whooping cough, scarlatina, mumps, he was sure he did not know what not; every one of them from the baby up. There was medicine, and there were doctor's bills, and there was sitting up with them at night—their mother usually did that. Then she must needs pale down herself, like a poorly-finished photograph; all her colour and roundness and sparkle gone; and if ever a man liked to have a pretty wife about it was he. Moreover she had a cough, and her shoulders had grown round, stooping so much over the heavy baby, and her breath came short, and she had a way of being tired. Then she never stirred out of the house—he found out about that one day; she had no bonnet, and her shawl had been cut up into blankets for the crib. The children had stopped going to school. "They could not buy the new arithmetic," their mother said, half under her breath. Yesterday there was nothing for dinner but Johnny-cake, nor a large one at that. To-morrow the saloon rents were due. Annie talked about pawning one of the bureaus. Annie had had great purple rings under her eyes for six weeks.

He would not bear the purple rings and quivering mouth any longer. He hated the sight of her, for the sight stung him. He hated the corn-cake and the untaught children. He hated the whole dreary, dragging, needy home. The ruin of it dogged him like a ghost, and he should be the ruin of it as long as he stayed in it. Once fairly rid of him, his scolding and drinking, his wasting and failing, Annie would send the children to work, and find ways to live. She had energy and invention, a plenty of it in her young, fresh days, before he came across her life to drag her down. Perhaps he should make a golden fortune, and come back to her some summer day with a silk dress and servants, and make it all up; in theory this was about what he expected to do. But if his ill-luck went westward with him, and the silk dress never turned up, why, she would forget him, and be better off, and that would be the end of it.

So here he was, ticketed and started, fairly bound for Colorado, sitting with his hat over his eyes, and thinking about it.



Elizabeth Stuart Phelps

"Hm-m. Asleep," pronounced Tommy, with his keen glance into the corner. "Guess I'll wake him up."

He laid his cheek down on his little fiddle—you don't know how Tommy loved that little fiddle—and struck up a gay, rollicking tune:

"I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me."

The man in the corner sat quite still. When it was over he shrugged his shoulders.

"When folks are asleep they don't hist their shoulders, not as a general thing," observed Tommy. "We'll try another."

Tommy tried another. Nobody knows what possessed the little fellow, the little fellow himself least of all; but he tried this:

"We've lived and loved together,
Through many changing years."

It was a new tune and he wanted practice, perhaps.

The train jarred and started slowly; the gloved exquisite, waiting hackmen, baggage-masters, coffee-counter, and station walls slid back; engine-house and prison towers, and labyrinths of tracks, slipped by; lumber and shipping took their place, with clear spaces between, where sea and sky shone through. The speed of the train increased with a sickening sway; old wharves shot past, with the green water sucking at their piers; the city shifted by and out of sight.

"We've lived and loved together,"

played Tommy in a little plaintive wail,

"We've lived and loved"——

"Confound the boy!" Harmon pushed up his hat with a jerk, and looked out of the window. The night was coming on. A dull sunset lay low on the water, burning like a bale-fire through the snaky trail of smoke that went writhing past the car windows. Against lonely signal-houses and little deserted beaches the water was plashing drearily, and playing monotonous basses to Tommy's wail:

"Through many changing years,
Many changing years."

It was a nuisance this music in the cars. Why didn't somebody stop it? What did the child mean by playing that? They had left the city far behind now. He wondered how far. He pushed up the window fiercely, venting the passion of the music on the first thing

that came in his way, and thrust his head out to look back. Through the undulating smoke, out in the pale glimmer from the sky, he could see a low, red tongue of land, covered with the twinkle of lighted homes. Somewhere there, in among the quivering warmth, was one—

What was that boy about now? Not "Home, sweet home"? But that was what Tommy was about.

They were lighting the lamps now in the car. Harmon looked at the conductor's face, as the sickly yellow flare struck on it, with a curious sensation. He wondered if he had a wife and five children; if he ever thought of running away from them; what he would think of a man who did; what most people would think; what she would think. She!—ah, she had it all to find out yet.

"There's no place like home,"

said Tommy's little fiddle,

"O, no place like home."

Now this fiddle of Tommy's may have had a crack or so in it, and I cannot assert that Tommy never struck a false note; but the man in the corner was not fastidious as a musical critic; the sickly light was flickering through the car, the quiver on the red flats was quite out of sight, the train was shricking away into the west—the baleful, lonely west—which was dying fast now out there upon the sea, and it is a fact that his hat went slowly down over his face again, and that his face went slowly down upon his arm.

There, in the lighted home out upon the flats, that had drifted by for ever, she sat waiting now. It was about time for him to be in to supper; she was beginning to wonder a little where he was; she was keeping the coffee hot, and telling the children not to touch their father's pickles; she had set the table and drawn the chairs; his pipe lay filled for him upon the shelf over the stove. Her face in the light was worn and white—the dark rings very dark; she was trying to hush the boys, teasing for their supper; begging them to wait a few minutes, only a few minutes, he would surely be here then. She would put the baby down presently, and stand at the window with her hands —Annie's hands once were not so thin—raised to shut out the light—watching, watching.

The children would eat their supper; the table would stand untouched, with his chair in its place; still she would go to the window,

and stand watching, watching. Oh, the long night that she must stand watching, and the days, and the years!

"Sweet, sweet home,"

played Tommy.

By and by there was no more of "Sweet Home."

"How about that cove with his head lopped down on his arms?" speculated Tommy, with a business-like air.

He had only stirred once, then put his face down again. But he was awake, awake in every nerve; and listening, to the very curve of his fingers. Tommy knew that; it being part of his trade to learn how to use his eyes. The sweet, loyal passion of the music—it would take worse playing than Tommy's to drive the sweet, loyal passion out of Annie Laurie—grew above the din of the train!

"'Twas there that Annie Laurie
Gave me her promise true."

She used to sing that, the man was thinking—this other Annie of his own. Why, she had been his own, and he had loved her once. How he had loved her! Yes, she used to sing that when he went to see her on Sunday nights, before they were married—in her pink, plump, pretty days. Annie used to be very pretty.

"Gave me her promise true,"

hummed the little fiddle.

"That's a fact," said poor Annie's husband, jerking the words out under his hat, "and kept it too, she did."

Ah, how Annie had kept it! The whole dark picture of her married years—the days of work and pain, the nights of watching, the patient voice, the quivering mouth, the tact and the planning and the trust for to-morrow, the love that had borne all things, believed all things, hoped all things, uncomplaining—rose into outline to tell him how she had kept it.

"Her face it is the fairest
That e'er the sun shone on,"

suggested the little fiddle. That it should be darkened for ever, the sweet face! and that he should do it—he, sitting here, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

"And ne'er forget will I,"

murmured the little fiddle.

He would have knocked the man down who had told him twenty years ago that he ever should forget ; that he should be here to-night, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

But it was better for her to be free from him. He and his cursed ill-luck were a drag on her and the children, and would always be. What was that she had said once ?

" Never mind, Jack, I can bear anything as long as I have you."

And here he was, with his ticket bought, bound for Colorado.

He wondered if it were ever too late in the day for a fellow to make a man of himself. He wondered :

" And she's a' the world to me,
And for bonnie Annie Laurie
I'd lay me doon and dee,"

sang the little fiddle, triumphantly.

Harmon shook himself, and stood up. The train was slackening ; the lights of a way-station bright ahead. It was about time for supper and his mother, so Tommy put down his fiddle and handed around his faded cap. The merchant threw him a penny and returned to his tax-list. The old lady was fast asleep with her mouth open.

" Come here," growled Harmon, with his eyes very bright. Tommy shrank back, almost afraid of him.

" Come here," softening, " I won't hurt you. I tell you, boy, you don't know what you've done to-night."

" Done, sir ? " Tommy couldn't help laughing, though there was a twinge of pain at his stout little heart, as he fingered the solitary penny in the faded cap. " Done ? Well, I guess I've waked you up, sir, which was about what I meant to do."

" Yes, that is it," said Harmon, very distinctly, pushing up his hat, " you've waked me up. Here, hold your cap."

They had puffed into the station now and stopped. He emptied his purse into the little cap, shook it clean of paper and copper alike, was out of the car and off the train before Tommy could have said Jack Robinson.

" My eyes ! " gasped Tommy, " that chap had a ticket for New York, sure ! Methusalah ! Look a here ! One, two, three—must have been crazy ; that's it, crazy."

" He'll never find out," muttered Harmon, turning away from the station lights, and striking back through the night for the red flats and home. " He'll never find out what he has done, nor, please God, shall she."

It was late when he came in sight of the house; it had been a long tramp across the tracks, and hard; he being stung by a bitter wind from the east all the way, tired with the monotonous treading of the sleepers, and with crouching in perilous niches to let the trains go by.

She stood watching at the window, as he had known that she would stand, her hands raised to her face, her figure cut out against the warm light of the room. He stood still a moment and looked at her, hidden in the shadow of the street, thinking his own thoughts. The publican, in the old story, hardly entered the beautiful temple with more humble step than he his home that night.

She sprang to meet him, pale with her watching and fear.

"Worried, Annie, were you? I haven't been drinking; don't be frightened—no, not the theatre either this time. Some business, dear; business that delayed me. I'm sorry you were worried, I am, Annie. I've had a long walk. It is pleasant here. I believe I'm tired, Annie." He faltered, and turned away his face.

"Dear me," said Annie, "why, you poor fellow, you are all tired out. Sit right up here by the fire, and I will bring the coffee. I've tried so hard not to let it boil away, you don't know, Jack; and I was so afraid something had happened to you."

Her face, her voice, her touch, seemed more than he could bear for a minute, perhaps. He gulped down his coffee, choking.

"Annie, look here." He put down his cup, trying to smile and make a jest of the words. "Suppose a fellow had it in him to be a rascal, and nobody ever knew it, eh?"

"I should rather not know it, if I were his wife," said Annie.

"But you couldn't care anything more for him, you know, Annie?"

"I don't know," said Annie, shaking her head with a little perplexed smile; "you would be just Jack, *anyhow*."

Jack coughed, took up his coffee-cup, set it down hard, strode once or twice across the room, kissed the baby in the crib, kissed his wife, and sat down again, winking at the fire.

"I wonder if He had anything to do with sending him," he said presently, under his breath.

"Sending whom?" asked puzzled Annie.

"Business, dear, just business. I was thinking of a boy who did a little job for me to-night, that's all."

And that is all that she knows to this day about the man sitting in the corner, with his hat over his eyes, bound for Colorado.

CAPTAIN ROLAND T. COFFIN
circa 1845

HOW OLD WIGGINS WORE SHIP

AN OLD SAILOR'S YARN

"WELL, sir," said the old sailor, "here we are ag'in. I ain't been round here much lately, and atwixt you and me, she's put the 'kybosh' onto it, holdin' that comin' round here and hystin' are promotin' of rheumatics, which, as are well known, they come of long and various exposures in all climates, to say nothin' of watchin' onto a damp dock night arter night continual. But what's the use? Everybody knows as a quiet home are better than silver and fine gold, which it stands to reason are to be obtained in two ways. Wimmin are like sailors in some respects; whoever has anythin' to do with 'em must either be saddled and bridled, leastwise, or else booted and spurred. You've got to ride 'em, or else they'll ride you. Bein' a sailorman myself, it ain't likely as I'd say anythin' ag'in 'em; but if the truth must be told, I'll say this—that while it'll never do, not at no price, for to let sailors git the upper hand, there's many a man as has giv' the helm into the hands of his old woman and made a better v'yage thereby; and I don't mind sayin', sir, that havin' while follerin' the water got into the habit of allowin' her for to be skipper in the house durin' my short stoppin's on shore, it got for to be so much the custom, that since comin' home for a full due I ain't never tried for to break away from it; and though human natur' is falliable, and she does make mistakes, especially about the hystin', on the whole, and by and large, I judges I've been a gainer by it, as I believes at least eight men out of ten would be if they took the hint accordin' and went and done likewise.

"I don't go for to say as she ever goes to go to say I ain't a-goin' for to let you go there; but it are terrible aggrivokin' when the rheumatics twinges awful, and as it might be that this sawmill don't want no more splinters laid onto it, to have her feelin'ly remark, 'Well, if you will go round a-guzzlin' ale with your swell friends and a-leavin'

your lawful wife to home alone you must expect to pay for it,' whereas I know it are the dock and other causes long gone by ; but that knowledge don't ease the pain a morsel, and the last time I were that way tantalized I swore I wouldn't come here no more. But whatever are the use ? Man resolves and re-resolves and then takes another snifter, and so here I are, and bein' as it's cold, as so she sha'n't have no basis for her unfeelin' remark about guzzlin' ale, we'll let him make it hot rum, and arter the old receipt, neither economizin' in the rum or the sugar, but givin' a fair drink for honest money.

" Well, well (just mix another afore the glass cools off), to think how the time goes. Here it are autumn ag'in, and in a few weeks 'twill be winter. It reminds me (I'll take one more, if you please, with one lump less of sugar and the space in rum) that I'm gettin' old, and I feels it. My eyes ain't so good and my legs ain't so good, and I ain't so good all over. When I goes down to the dock my lantern are heavier than it used to were, and the distance ain't so short as it used to seem from the dock to the house. Afore many years I'll be put quietly away, and though I'd prefer bein' beautifully sewed up and launched shipshape in blue water, with a hundred pound weight for to keep me down, I s'poses it won't make much difference, nohow. Anyhow, if I lives as long as old Wiggins, I hopes I may go as well at the eend. I don't think I ever told you about him, and if you'll let him fill 'em up ag'in—for it's one of the vartues of hot rum that the more you drinks the thirstier you gits—I'll reel you the yarn right off.

" Old Wiggins had been all his life into the Liverpool trade and had got well fixed, so far as cash were consarned ; and so when he came for to be seventy or seventy-two years old he were persuaded for to knock off for a full due and spend the balance of his life ashore. Goin' up to some place in Connecticut, he buys hisself a place there and settles down. Well, for a time he were all right, a-fixin' up his house, a-buildin' new barns and hen-coops and fences and the like, and I've heerd tell that the house where he kep' his pigs were better than any dwellin'-house in that region, and the whole place were the wonder of the country roundabout ; but arter he had fixed his house all up like a ship, with little state-rooms all through the upper part of it, and had got everythin' inside and out in shipshape order and there weren't nothin' else he could think of for to do, he gits terribly homesick and discontented, and times when he'd come to

the city for to collect his sheer of the profits of ships as he had a interest in, he'd sit for hours on the wharf a-watchin' the vessels on the river, and it were like drawin' teeth for to git him to leave and go up to his home. His eyes had giv' out sometime afore he quit the sea, and his legs was shaky, so as he had to walk with a settin' pole, and his hand were tremblin' and unsteady; but aloft he were still all right, and his head were as clear as a bell.

"Arter bein' ashore a matter of seven year, he comes to town one day to see a ship off what he had been in afore he quit, and in which he had a half interest. The skipper of that ship, which her name were the *Vesuvius*, he bein' called Perkins, in comin' from the Custom House arter clearin', got athwart-hawse of a dray and were knocked down, the wheels passin' over his legs and breakin' of 'em, and whatever do old Wiggins do—the home-sickness bein' strong onto him—but says to the agents, 'It are a pity for to lose a day's fair wind; I'll go aboard and take her out myself'; and, sure enough, he done it, never lettin' on to the folks at home, but leavin' the agents to tell 'em arter he were gone.

"Into that ship I were shipped, she bein' 830 tons or thereabouts with three royal yards across, and loaded with flour and grain, there bein' sixteen of us afore the mast, with two mates, carpenter and cook and steward, leavin' on the 16th of November, and, unless I'm mistakened, in the year 1843.

"We towed down to the Hook and out over the bar, and then put the muslin on to her with a fine breeze from sou'west, and I supposes there weren't a happier man in the world than old Wiggins when he discharged the pilot and steamer and took charge.

"'I've giv' 'em the slip,' says he to the mate. 'I've giv' 'em the slip. They thought I were too old for to go to sea, but I'll show 'em thar's plenty of life into me yet. Git out all the starboard stunsails and see to it that she's kep' a-movin' night and day, for in sixteen days I expects to walk the pierhead in Liverpool.' Well, sure enough, a-movin' she were kep', and I never seen harder carryin's on than I seen that passage; but we never lost a stitch of canvas, 'cause the old man not only knowed how to carry it, but he knowed how to take it off of her when it be to come off, and in a gale of wind he'd 'liven up wonderful, whereas in light weather he'd show his age. It were funny for to see him takin' the sun and tryin' to read her off, which he weren't able for to do, not by no means.

"'What d'ye stand on?' he'd say to the mate arter screwin' his eye to the glass and tryin' to make it out; and when the mate would tell him, he'd say, 'I believe that agrees with me; just take a squint at my instrument; my eyesight ain't just as good as it used for to be, and I don't quite make it out.' Then the mate would read him off his instrument, and arter he'd made it eight bells he'd go down and work it up and prick her off. The fourteenth day out we made the light on Fastnet Rock, off Cape Clear, and went bowlin' along the coast, passin' Tuskar next day, and swingin' her off up channel and round Hollyhead past the Skerries and takin' a pilot off P'int Lynas. It were a sight worth seein' for to watch the old man handle her in takin' a pilot. The wind were fresh from west-nor'west, and we passed the Skerries with all three royals set and lower topmast and to'gallan' stunsails on the port side. As soon as ever we passed the rocks we kep' off for Lynas, and as soon as the stunsails got by the lee they was hauled in. Then with the wind about two p'ints on the starboard quarter we went bilin' along for the boat which we seen standin' off shore just to the east'ard of the P'int. There were a pretty bubble of a sea on, and afore we gits to him he goes about standin' in to the bay and givin' sheet. We follers along arter him, goin' two feet to his one, still carryin' all three royals, with hands at halliards and clewlines. Just afore we gits to him the old man sings out, 'Clew up the royals, haul down the flyin' jib, haul up the crochick and mainsail.' By this time we was well under the land and in smooth water. Keepin' his eye on to the pilot-boat, which were a couple of p'ints onto our weather bow, the old man no sooner seen her come to than he sings out, 'Hard up the helm!' And as we swung off afore the wind we runned up the foresail and laid the head-yards square; then mannin' the port main braces we let the to'gallan' yards run down on the caps and let her come to ag'in, and so nicely had the old man calculated the distance that as she come to the wind she shot up alongside of the pilot-boat, stoppin' just abreast of her and not over twenty foot away.

"'That was well done, Mr. Mate,' said the pilot, as he come over the side; 'some of these galoots makes us chase 'em half a day afore we can board 'em. Fill away the head-yards, put your helm up, run up the flyin' jib, brail up the spanker check in the arter yards,' and as she swung off he comes aft to the wheel where I was a-steerin', and says, 'Keep her east-sou'east, my man; giv' us a chew of terbacker.

We soon had the muslin piled onto her ag'in, and sure enough, as old Wiggins had said, the sixteenth day out he walked the pierhead in Liverpool.

" I understood as old Wiggins was made a good deal on in Liverpool as bein' the oldest skipper that had ever come there, and the Board of Trade and what not giv' him dinners, and so on—which, considerin' his age, he oughtn't to have took—and by other skippers at the hotel he were much honoured, bein' giv' the head of the table and treated with great deference—and all this dinin' and winin' and feastin' weren't no good to him—and, arter a stay of three weeks, when we ag'in went down the river with full complement of passengers and a good freight, he weren't not by no means as well as when we went in. We had, too, a tough time down channel, a stiff sou'wester, with rain and thick weather, and it told onto the old man, so that when arter bein' out a week we at last got clear of Tuskar and had the ocean open, the relief from the strain fetched him, and he were took down sick.

" Whether it were to punish him for comin' to sea at his time of life or not I don't know; but from this on we did have the devil's own weather. Gale after gale from the west'ard, shiftin' constant from sou'west to nor'west, and tryin' constant to see from which quarter it could blow the hardest.

" The mate were a plucky and a able young feller, by the name of Graham, and he kep' her a-dancin' as well as the old man would have done. Constant she had everythin' put to her that she'd bear, and always were she kep' on the tack where she'd make the most westin', and so she struggled along till we was as far as thirty degrees west, we bein' thirty days out and not yet half way. Every day we asked the steward how old Wiggins were a-gittin' on, and every day he'd shake his head and say ' no better ' ; and it come to be understood, fore and aft, that it were as much as a toss-up if the old man ever smelled grass ag'in. We had a little let-up arter gittin' into the thirties, and for a day or so had fine weather and a chance to dry our dunnage. Fine days, however, is scarce in January on that herrin' pond—I'll take just another ; mentionin' herrin's makes me dry '—and when you gits 'em they are most always weather-breeders. I went up on to the main royal yard when our side come up at eight o'clock one mornin' for to sew on the leather on the parral, and it were like a day in May. Afore I got the leather sewed on I be to look out for

myself, 'cause they was goin' to clew up the sail, and from that time on it breezed on from the sou'ard, keepin' us constantly takin' the sail off of her, till at four bells we was under double-reefed topsails and reefed courses, with jib, crochick, and spanker stowed. We hammered away under this, carryin' on very heavy, 'cause she were headin' west-nor'west, which were a good course, till eight bells in the arternoon watch, when the sea gittin' up so tremendiously we had to furl the reefed main-sail and mizzen topsail and close reef the fore and main-topsails.

" You'd think that were snug enough for any ship, now, wouldn't you ? and sartin it are ; no ship ever ought to have less canvas than this, till it blows away, 'cause she's safer with it onto her than with it off, the reefed foresail supportin' the yard. Well, we'd had gales and gales, but this here gale beat anythin' that I'd ever seen, and at seven bells in the first night watch, with a tremendious surge, the weather leech rope of the foresail giv' way, and in a jiffy away went the foreyard in the slings—the foresail and fore-topsail goin' into ribbons. All hands, of course, was busy for'ard, tryin' for to git some of this wreck stuff tranquillized, when all of a suddint from the poop come the old man's voice, full and round and clear, and not shrill and pipin' as we'd heard it last, and above all the roarin' of the gale and the din of the slattin' canvas we heerd him shout : ' Stations for wearin' ship. We must git her head round to the sou'ard,' he bawled in the ear of the mate, as Mr. Graham struggled aft ; ' the shift will come in less than half a hour, and it's goin' to be tremendious ; if it catches us aback it won't leave a stick into her ; but it ain't a-goin' to catch us, sir ; I've brung her through many and many a time like this. I'll bring her through this one, and then you must do the rest. Now, then,' says he, ' stand by, put your helm just a few spokes a-weather, don't check her at all with the rudder, slack a foot or two of the lee braces and check in to wind'ard ; keep your eye constant on that sail, Mr. Clark '—that were the second mate—' and don't let it shake ; keep it good full and give her way ; lay the crochick yard square, and come up to the main-braces, all of you.' And so, gently, as if she'd been a sick child, he coaxed her to go off, and she begin to gather way. As soon as she done so the helm were put hard up, and the main-yard rounded in, just keepin' the topsail alift, but not permittin' it to shake. As she went off till she got the sea on the quarter, a mighty wave came a-rollin' along, boardin' us about the

main riggin', floodin' the decks and dashin' out the starboard bulwarks. The minnit we got the wind onto the starboard quarter we braced the mainyard sharp up with the port-braces and bowsed the weather ones as taut as a harp string. 'Now, then,' says the old man, 'never mind that trash for'ard, let that go; git a jumper on to the main-yard and a preventer main-topsail brace aloft; lay aloft for your lives, and clap preventer gaskets on everythin' that's furled; we'll have it soon from the north'ard fit to take the masts out of her.' He were right. In a short time there were a instant's lull, and then with a roar that were almost deafenin' came the cyclone from the north. Thanks to the old man's sagacity and experience, howsever, he was a-headin' sou'-south-east when it hit us, and it struck us right aft.

"'Steady as you go,' shouts the old man, and then, a minnit arter, as she gathered way, he says ag'in to the mate, 'We must let her come to, Mr. Graham, we can't run her in the teeth of the old s'utherly sea; ease down the helm and let her smell of it.' It was a powerful whiff she took, for as she come to and felt the force of the wind, all three to'gallan' masts went short off at the cap, the main-topsail sheets parted, and in an instant there wasn't a piece of the sail left big enough for a lady's handkerchief.

"'That's all it can do,' said the old man to the mate, bitterly; 'git this trash on deck as soon as possible, and git her a-waggin' once more; I've brung her through it safe, and am goin' home,' and with that he dropped onto the poop as dead as mutton. He had come on deck bare-headed and with nothin' on but his drawers and shirt, just as he had laid in his bunk for a fortnight, and the exposure had carried him off. However he knowed that the shift were so near nobody ever could tell. There were no doubt, however, but that his gittin' her weared round were our salvation. If that gust had a-struck us aback our masts would have gone sartin, and it's a toss-up but what we'd a-gone down starn fust afore she'd a-backed round. Next day we giv' old Wiggins a funeral fit for the Emperor of Rooshy, and he well desarved it. I don't know as ever I seen a prettier sew-up than we done on him, wrappin' him first in the American ensign and then kiverin' him with brand-new No. 4 canvas. Considerin' the sails we'd lost and how much we needed the canvas, I think he must have been satisfied that we done the handsome thing by him. The day was beautiful and clear, although the wind still blowed a gale. We hadn't been able to do much with the wreck stuff, except git lashin's onto it

for to keep it from swingin' about; and we hadn't dared for to try for to send up another maintopsail. We had set the reefed mainsail for to steady her, and that were all. The three to'gallan' masts was still a-hangin' over the side, and the ribbons of the fore sail and fore topsail was still a-flutterin' in the breeze, when at eight bells, at mid-day, all hands was called for to bury the dead. Everythin' that we had in the way of nice clothes we had put on for to do honour to our captain, and most of us was able to sport white shirts and broadcloth. We laid the old man onto a plank and kivered him with the Union Jack, and all hands gathered round him, while Mr. Graham read the sarvice. Everythin' went lovely, and just at the proper time we tilted the plank, and he slipped off without a hitch of any kind. Arter the mate finished the readin', he said, 'Men, there's a good man gone arter a long life of great usefulness. He were a sailor and a gentleman. I don't think as we ought for to cry over sich a man, and I propose we giv' him three cheers and God bless him'; and heartier cheers was never giv' than we giv' that day, arter which all hands got dinner."

STANLEY WATERLOO
1846-1913

AN ULM

"IT is as you say; he is not handsome, certainly not beautiful as flowers and the stars and women are, but he has another sort of beauty, I think, such a beauty as made Victor Hugo's monster, Gwynplaine, fascinating, or gives a certain sort of charm to a banded rattlesnake. He is not much like the dove-eyed setter over whom we shot woodcock this afternoon, but to me he is the fairest object on the face of the earth, this gaunt, brindled Ulm.

"What is there about an Ulm especially attractive? Well, I don't know. About Ulms in the abstract, very little, I imagine. About an Ulm in the concrete, particularly the brute near us, a great deal. The Ulm is a morbid development in dog-breeding, anyhow. I remember, as doubtless you do as well, when the animals first made their appearance in this country a few years ago. The big, dirty-white beasts, dappled with dark blotches and with countenances unexplainably threatening, reminded one of hyenas with huge dog forms. Germans brought them over first, and they were affected by saloon-keepers and their class. They called them Siberian blood-hounds then, but the dog-fanciers got hold of them, and they became, with their sinister obtrusiveness, a feature of the shows; the breed was defined more clearly, and now they are known as Great Danes or Ulms, indifferently. How they originated I never cared to learn. I imagine it sometimes. I fancy some jilted, jaundiced descendant of the sea-rovers, retiring to his castle, and endeavouring, by mating some ugly bloodhound with a wild wolf, to produce a quadruped as fierce and cowardly and treacherous as a man or woman may be.

"Never mind about the dog, and tell you why I've been gentleman, farmer, sportsman and half-hermit here for the last five years—leaving everything just as I was getting a grip on reputation in town, leaving a pretty wife, too, after only a year of marriage? I can hardly do that—that is, I can hardly drop the dog, because, you see,

he's part of the story. No need for going far back with the legend. You know it all up to the time I was married. You dined with me once or twice later. You remember my wife? Certainly she was a pretty woman, well bred, too, and wise, in a woman's way. I've seen a good deal of the world, but I don't know that I ever saw a more tactful entertainer, or in private a more adorable woman when she chose to be affectionate. I was in that fool's paradise which is so big and holds so many people, sometimes for a year and a half after marriage. Then one day I found myself outside the wall.

"There was a beautiful set to my wife's chin, you may recollect—a trifle strong for a woman; but I used to say to myself that, as students know, the mother most impresses the male offspring, and that my sons would be men of will. There was a fulness to her lips. Well, so there is to mine. There was a delicious, languorous craft in the look of her eyes at times. I cared not at all for that. I thought she loved me and knew me. Love of me would give all faithfulness; knowledge of me, even were the inclination to wrong existent, would beget a dread of consequences. My dear boy, we don't know women. Sometimes women don't know men. She did not know me any more than she loved me. She has become better informed.

"What happened? Well, now come in the dog and the man. The dog was given me by a friend who was dog-mad, and who said to me the puppy would develop into a marvel of his kind, so long a pedigree he had. The man came in the form of an accidental new friend, an old friend of my wife, as subsequently developed. I invited him to my house, and he came often. I liked to have him there. I wanted to go to Congress—you know all about that—and wasn't often at home in the evening. He made the evenings less lonely for my wife, and I was glad of it.

"Meanwhile that brute of a puppy in the basement had been developing. He had grown into a great, rangy, long-toothed monster, with a leer on his dull face, and the servants were afraid of him. I got interested and made a pet of the uncouth animal. I studied the Ulm character. I learned queer things about him. Despite his size and strength, he was frequently overcome by other dogs when he wandered into the street. He was tame until the shadows began to gather and the sun went down. Then a change came upon him. He ranged about the basement, and none but I dared venture down

there. He was, in short, a cur by day, at night a demon. I supposed the early dogs of this breed had been trained to night slaughter and savageness alone, and that it was a case of atavism, a recurrence of hereditary instinct. It interested me vastly, and I resolved to make him the most perfect of watch-dogs. I trained him to lie couchant, and to spring upon and tear a stuffed figure I would bring into the basement. I noticed he always sprang at the throat. 'Hard lines,' thought I, 'for the burglar who may venture here!'

"It was a little later than this nonsense with the dog, which was a piece of boyishness, a degree of relaxation to the strain of my fight with down-town conditions, that there came in what makes a man think the affairs of this world are not adjusted rightly, and makes recurrent the impulse which was first unfortunate for Abel—no doubt worse for Cain. There is no need for going into details of the story, how I learned, or when. My knowledge was all-sufficient and absolute. My wife and my friend were sinning, riotously and fully, but discreetly—sinning against all laws of right and honour, and against me. The mechanism of it was simple. The grounds back of my house, you know, were large, and you may not have forgotten the lane of tall, clipped shrubbery that led up from the rear to a summer-house. His calls in the evening were made early and ended early. The pinkness of all propriety was about them. The servants suspected nothing. But, his call ended, the graceful gentleman, friend of mine and lover of my wife, would walk but a few hundred paces, then turn and enter my grounds at the rear gate I have mentioned, and pass up the arbour to the pretty summer-house. He would find time for pleasant anticipation there as he lolled upon one of the soft divans with which I had furnished the charming place; but his waiting would not be long; she would soon come to him.

When I learned what I have told—after the first awful five minutes—I don't like to think of them, even now—I became the most deliberate man on the face of this earth peopled with sinners. Sometimes, they say, the whole substance of a man's blood may be changed in a second by chemical action. My blood was changed, I think. The poison had transmuted it. There was a leaden sluggishness, but my head was clear.

"I had odd fancies. I remember I thought of a nobleman who had another torn slowly apart by horses for proving false to him at the siege of Calais. His cruelty had been a youthful horror to me.

Now I had a tremendous appreciation of the man. 'Good fellow, good fellow!' I went about muttering to myself in a foolish, involuntary way. I wondered how my wife's lover could endure the strain of four strong Clydesdales, each started at the same moment, one north, one south, one east, one west. His charming personal appearance recurred to me, and I thought of his fine neck. Women like a fine-throated man, and he was one. I wondered if my wife's fancy tended the same way. It was well this idea came to me, for it gave me an inspiration. I thought of the dog.

"There is no harm, is there, in training a dog to pull down a stuffed figure? There is no harm, either, if the stuffed figure be given the simulated habiliments of some friend of yours. And what harm can there be in training the dog in a garden-arbour instead of in a basement? I dropped into the way of being at home a little more. I told my wife she should have alternate nights at least, and she was grateful and delighted. And on the nights when I was at home I would spend half an hour in the grounds with the dog, saying I was training him in new things, and no one paid attention. I taught him to crouch in the little lane close to the summer-house, and to rush down and leap upon the manikin when I displayed it at the other end. Ye gods! how he learned to tear it down and tear its imitation throat! The training over, I would lock him in the basement as usual. But one night I had a dispatch come to me summoning me to another city. The other man was to call that evening, and he came. I left before nine o'clock, but just before going I released the dog. He darted for the post in the garden, and with gleaming eyes crouched, as he had been accustomed to do, watching the entrance of the arbour.

"I can always sleep well on a train. I suppose the regular sequence of sounds, the rhythmic throb of the motion, has something to do with it. I slept well and awoke refreshed when I reached my destination. I was driven to a hotel; I took a bath; I did what I rarely do, I drank a cocktail before breakfast. I sat down at the table; I gave my order, and then lazily opened the morning paper. One of the dispatches deeply interested me.

"'Inexplicable Tragedy' was the headline. By the way, 'Inexplicable Tragedy' contains just about the number of letters to fill a line neatly in the style of heading now the fashion. I don't know about such things, but it seems to me compact and neat and most effective. The lines which followed gave a skeleton of the story:

" ' A Well-known Gentleman killed by a Dog.

" ' Theory of the Case which appears the only one possible under the Circumstances.'

" I read the dispatch at length. A man is naturally interested in the news from his own city. It told how a popular club man had been found in the early morning lying dead in the grounds of a friend, his throat torn open by a huge dog, an Ulm, belonging to that friend, which had somehow escaped from the basement of the house, where it was usually confined. The gentleman had been a caller at the residence the same evening, and had left at a comparatively early hour. Some time later the mistress of the place had gone out to a summer-house in the grounds to see that the servants had brought in certain things used at a luncheon there during the day, but had seen nothing save the dog, which snarled at her, when she had gone into the house again. In the morning the gardener found the body of Mr. ——— lying about midway of an arbour leading from a gateway to the summer-house. It was supposed that the unfortunate gentleman had forgotten something, a message or something of that sort, and upon its recurrence to him had taken the shorter cut to reach the house again, as he might do naturally, being an intimate friend of the family.

" Oddly enough, I received no telegram from my wife, but under the circumstances I could do nothing else than return to my home at once. I sought my wife, to whom I expressed my horror and my sorrow, but she said very little. The dog I found in the basement, and he seemed very glad to see me. It has always been a source of regret to me that dogs cannot talk. I see that some one has learned that monkeys have a language, and that he can converse with them, after a fashion. If we could but talk with dogs!

" I saw the body, of course. I asked a famous surgeon once which would kill a man the quicker: severance of carotid artery or the jugular vein? I forget what his answer was, but in this case it really cut no figure. The dog had torn both open. It was on the left side. From this I infer that the dog sprang from the right, and that it was that big fang in his left upper jaw that did the work. Come here, you brute, and let me open your mouth! There, you see, as I turn his lips back, what a beauty of a tooth it is! I've thought of having that

particular fang pulled, and of having it mounted and wearing it as a charm on my watch chain, but the dog is likely to die long before I do, and I've concluded to wait till then. But it's a beautiful tooth!

"I've mentioned, I believe, that my wife was a woman of keen perception. You will understand that after the unfortunate affair in my garden our relations were somewhat—I don't know just what word to use, but we'll say 'quaint.' It's a pretty little word, and sounds grotesque in this conversation. One day I provided an allowance for her, a good one, and came away here alone to play farmer and shoot and fish for four or five years. Somehow I lost interest in things, and knew I needed a rest. As for her, she left the house very soon and went to her own home. Oddly enough, she is in love with me now—in earnest this time. But we shall not live together again. I could never eat a peach off which the street vendors had rubbed the bloom. I never bought goods sold after a fire, even though externally untouched. I don't believe much in salvage as applied to the relations of men and women. I've seen, in the early morning, the unfortunates who eat choice bits from the garbage barrels. But I couldn't do it, you know. Odd, isn't it, what little things will disturb the tenor of a man's existence and interfere with all his plans?

"I came here and brought the dog with me. I'm fond of him, despite the failings in his character. Notwithstanding his currishness and the cowardly ferocity which comes out with the night, there is something definite about him. You know what to expect and what to rely upon. He does something. That is why I like Ulm.

"What am I going to do? Why, come back to town next year and pick up the threads. My nerves, which seemed a little out of the way, are better than they were when I came here. There's nothing to equal country air. I must have that whirl in my district yet. I don't think the boys have quite forgotten me. Have you noticed the drift at all? I could only judge from the papers. How are things in the Ninth Ward?"

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS
1848–1908

BRER RABBIT'S CRADLE

"I WISH you'd tell me what you tote a hankcher fer," remarked Uncle Remus, after he had reflected over the matter a little while.

"Why, to keep my mouth clean," answered the little boy. Uncle Remus looked at the lad, and shook his head doubtfully. "Uh-uh!" he exclaimed. "You can't fool folks when dey git ez ol' ez what I is. I been watchin' you now mo' days dan I kin count, an' I ain't never see yo' mouf dirty 'nuff fer ter be wiped wid a hankcher. It's allers clean—too clean fer ter suit me. Dar's yo' pa, now; when he wuz a little chap like you, his mouf useter git dirty in de mornin' an' stay dirty plum twel night. Dey wa'n't sca'cely a day dat he didn't look like he been playin' wid de pigs in de stable lot. Ef he yever is tote a hankcher, he ain't never show it ter me."

"He carries one now," remarked the little boy with something like a triumphant look on his face.

"Tooby sho'," said Uncle Remus; "tooby sho' he do. He start ter totin' one when he tuck an' tuck a notion fer ter go a-courtin'. It had his name in one cornder, an' he useter sprinkle it wid stuff out'n a pepper-sauce bottle. It sho' wuz rank, dat stuff wuz; it smell so sweet it make you fergit whar you live at. I take notice dat you ain't got none on yone."

"No; mother says that cologne or any kind of perfumery on your handkerchief makes you common."

Uncle Remus leaned his head back, closed his eyes, and permitted a heartrending groan to issue from his lips. The little boy showed enough anxiety to ask him what the matter was. "Nothin' much, honey; I wuz des tryin' fer ter count how many diffunt kinder people dey is in dis big worl', an' 'fo' I got mo' dan half done wid my countin', a pain struck me in my mizry, an' I had ter break off."

"I know what you mean," said the child. "You think mother is queer; grandmother thinks so too."

" How come you to be so wise, honey ? " Uncle Remus inquired, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

" I know by the way you talk, and by the way grandmother looks sometimes," answered the little boy.

Uncle Remus said nothing for some time. When he did speak, it was to lead the little boy to believe that he had been all the time engaged in thinking about something else. " Talkin' er dirty folks," he said, " you oughter seed yo' pa when he wuz a little bit er chap. Dey wuz long days when you couldn't tell ef he wuz black er white, he wuz dat dirty. He'd come out'n de big house in de mornin' ez clean ez a new pin, an' 'fo' ten er-clock you couldn't tell what kinder clof his cloze wuz made out'n. Many's de day when I've seed ol' Miss—dat's yo' great-gran-mammy—comb 'nuff trash out'n his head fer ter fill a basket."

The little boy laughed at the picture that Uncle Remus drew of his father. " He's very clean, now," said the lad loyally.

" Maybe he is an' maybe he ain't," remarked Uncle Remus, suggesting a doubt. " Dat's needer here ner dar. Is he any better off clean dan what he wuz when you couldn't put yo' han's on 'im widout havin' ter go an' wash um ? Yo' gran'mammy useter call 'im a pig, an' clean ez he may be now, I take notice dat he makes mo' complaint er headache an' de heartburn dan what he done when he wuz runnin' roun' here half-naked an' full er mud. I hear tell dat some nights he can't git no sleep, but when he wuz little like you—no, suh, I'll not say dat, bekaze he wuz bigger dan what you is fum de time he kin toddle roun' widout nobody he'pin' him ; but when he wuz ol' ez you an' twice ez big, dey ain't narry night dat he can't sleep—an' not only all night, but half de day ef dey'd 'a' let 'im. Ef dey'd let you run roun' here like he done, an' git dirty, you'd git big an' strong 'fo' you know it. Dey ain't nothin' mo' wholesomer dan a peck er two er clean dirt on a little chap like you."

There is no telling what comment the child would have made on this sincere tribute to clean dirt, for his attention was suddenly attracted to something that was gradually taking shape in the hands of Uncle Remus. At first it seemed to be hardly worthy of notice, for it had been only a thin piece of board. But now the one piece had become four pieces, two long and two short, and under the deft manipulations of Uncle Remus it soon assumed a boxlike shape.

The old man had reached the point in his work where silence was

necessary to enable him to do it full justice. As he fitted the thin boards together, a whistling sound issued from his lips, as though he were letting off steam; but the singular noise was due to the fact that he was completely absorbed in his work. He continued to fit and trim, and trim and fit, until finally the little boy could no longer restrain his curiosity. "Uncle Remus, what are you making?" he asked plaintively.

"Larroes fer ter kech meddlers," was the prompt and blunt reply.

"Well, what are larroes to catch meddlers?" the child insisted.

"Nothin' much an' sump'n mo'. Dicky, Dicky, killt a chicky, an' fried it quicky, in de oven, like a sloven. Den ter his daddy's Sunday hat, he tuck 'n' hitched de ol' black cat. Now what you reckon made him do dat? Ef you can't tell me word fer word an' spellin' fer spellin' we'll go out an' come in an' take a walk."

He rose, grunting as he did so, thus paying an unintentional tribute to the efficacy of age as the partner of rheumatic aches and stiff joints. "You hear me gruntin'," he remarked—"well, dat's bekaze I ain't de chicky fried by Dicky, which he e't 'nuff fer ter make 'im sicky." As he went out the child took his hand, and went trotting along by his side, thus affording an interesting study for those who concern themselves with the extremes of life. Hand in hand the two went out into the fields, and thence into the great woods, where Uncle Remus, after searching about for some time, carefully deposited his oblong box, remarking: "Ef I don't make no mistakes, dis ain't so mighty fur fum de place whar de creeturs has der playgroun', an' dey ain't no tellin' but what one un um'll creep in dar when deyer playin' hidin', an' ef he do, he'll sho be our meat."

"Oh, it's a trap!" exclaimed the little boy, his face lighting up with enthusiasm.

"An' dey wa'n't nobody here fer ter tell you," Uncle Remus declared, astonishment in his tone. "Well, ef dat don't bang my time, I ain't no free nigger. Now, ef dat had 'a' been yo' pa at de same age, I'd 'a' had ter tell 'im forty-lev'm times, an' den he wouldn't 'a' b'lieved me twel he see sump'n in dar tryin' fer ter git out. Den he'd say it wuz a trap, but not befo'. I ain't blamin' 'im," Uncle Remus went on, "kaze 'tain't eve'y chap dat kin tell a trap time he see it, an' mo' dan dat, traps don' allers ketch what dey er sot fer."

He paused, looked all around, and up in the sky, where fleecy clouds were floating lazily along, and in the tops of the trees, where

the foliage was swaying gently in the breeze. Then he looked at the little boy. " Ef I ain't gone an' got los'," he said, " we ain't so mighty fur fum de place whar Mr. Man, once 'pon a time—not yo' time ner yit my time, but some time—tuck'n' sot a trap for Brer Rabbit. In dem days, dey hadn't l'arnt how ter be kyarpenters, an' dish yer trap what I'm tellin' you 'bout wuz a great big contraption. Big ez Brer Rabbit wuz, it wuz lots too big fer him.

" Now, whiles Mr. Man wuz fixin' up dis trap, Mr. Rabbit wa'n't so mighty fur off. He hear de saw—er-rash ! er-rash !—an' he hear de hammer—bang, bang, bang !—an' he ax hisse'f what all dis racket wuz 'bout. He see Mr. Man come out'n his yard totin' sump'n, an' he got furder off ; he see Mr. Man comin' todes de bushes, an' he tuck ter de woods ; he see 'im comin' todes de woods, an' he tuck ter de bushes. Mr. Man tote de trap so fur an' no furder. He put it down, he did, an' Brer Rabbit watch 'im ; he put in de bait, an' Brer Rabbit watch 'im ; he fix de trigger, an' still Brer Rabbit watch 'im. Mr. Man look at de trap an' it satchify him. He look at it an' laugh, an' when he do dat, Brer Rabbit wunk one eye, an' wiggle his mustache, an' chaw his cud.

" An' dat ain't all he do, needer. He sot out in de bushes, he did, an' study how ter git some game in de trap. He study so hard, an' he got so errytated, dat he thumped his behime foot on de groun' twel it soun' like a cow dancin' out dar in de bushes, but 'twan't no cow, ner yit no calf—'twuz des Brer Rabbit studyin'. Atter so long a time, he put out down de road todes dat part er de country whar mos' er de creeturs live at. Eve'ytime he hear a fuss, he'd dodge in de bushes, kaze he wanter see who comin'. He keep on an' he keep on, an' bimeby he hear ol' Brer Wolf trottin' down de road.

" It so happen dat Brer Wolf wuz de ve'y one what Brer Rabbit wanter see. Dey wuz perlit ter one an'er, but dey wan't no frien'ly feelin' 'twix um. Well, here come ol' Brer Wolf, hongrier dan a chicken-hawk on a frosty mornin', an' ez he come up he see Brer Rabbit set by de side er de road lookin' like he done lose all his fambly an' his friends terboot.

" Dey pass de time er day, an' den Brer Wolf kinder grin an' say, ' Laws-a-massy, Brer Rabbit ! what ail you ? You look like you done had a spell er fever an' ague ; what de trouble ? ' ' Trouble, Brer Wolf ? You ain't never see no trouble twel you git whar I'm at. Maybe you wouldn't min' it like I does, kaze I ain't usen ter it. But

I boun' you done seed me light-minded fer de las' time. I'm done—I'm plum wo' out,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. Dis make Brer Wolf open his eyes wide. He say, 'Dis de fus' time I ever is hear you talk dat-a-way, Brer Rabbit; take yo' time an' tell me 'bout it. I ain't had my brekkus yit, but dat don't make no diffunce, long ez youer in trouble. I'll he'p you out ef I kin, an' mo' dan dat, I'll put some heart in de work.' When he say dis, he grin an' show his tushes, an' Brer Rabbit kinder edge 'way fum 'im. He say, 'Tell me de trouble, Brer Rabbit, an' I'll do my level bes' fer ter he'p you out.'

"Wid dat, Brer Rabbit 'low dat Mr. Man done been had 'im hired fer ter take keer er his truck patch, an' keep out de minks, de mush-rats an' de weasels. He say dat he done so well settin' up night atter night, when he des might ez well been in bed, dat Mr. Man prommus 'im sump'n extry 'sides de mess er greens what he gun 'im eve'y day. Atter so long a time, he say, Mr. Man 'low dat he gwineter make 'im a present uv a cradle so he kin rock de little Rabs ter sleep when dey cry. So said, so done, he say. Mr. Man make de cradle an' tell Brer Rabbit he kin take it home wid 'im.

"He start out wid it, he say, but it got so heavy he hatter set it down in de woods, an' dat's de reason why Brer Wolf seed 'im settin' down by de side er de road, lookin' like he in deep trouble. Brer Wolf sot down, he did, an' study, an' bimeby he say he'd like mighty well fer ter have a cradle fer his chillun, long ez cradles wuz de style. Brer Rabbit say dey been de style fer de longest, an' ez fer Brer Wolf wantin' one, he say he kin have de one what Mr. Man make fer him, kaze it's lots too big fer his chillun. 'You know how folks is,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. 'Dey try ter do what dey dunner how ter do, an' dar's der house bigger dan a barn, an' dar's de fence wid mo' holes in it dan what dey is in a saine, an' kaze dey have great big chillun dey got de idee dat eve'y cradle what dey make mus' fit der own chillun. An' dat's how come I can't tote de cradle what Mr. Man make fer me mo' dan ten steps at a time.'

"Brer Wolf ax Brer Rabbit what he gwineter do fer a cradle, an' Brer Rabbit 'low he kin manage fer ter git 'long wid de ol' one twel he kin 'suade Mr. Man ter make 'im an'er one, an' he don't speck dat'll be so mighty hard ter do. Brer Wolf can't he'p but b'lieve dey's some trick in it, an' he say he ain't see de ol' cradle when las' he wuz at Brer Rabbit house. Wid dat, Brer Rabbit bust out laughin'. He say, 'Dat's been so long back, Brer Wolf, dat I done fergit all 'bout it;

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'sides dat, ef dey wuz a cradle dar, I boun' you my ol' 'oman got better sense dan ter set de cradle in der parler, whar comp'ny comes'; an' he laugh so loud an' long dat he make Brer Wolf right shame er himse'f.

" He 'low, ol' Brer Wolf did, ' Come on, Brer Rabbit, an' show me whar de cradle is. Ef it's too big fer yo' chillun, it'll des 'bout fit mine.' An' so off dey put ter whar Mr. Man done sot his trap. 'Twa'nt so mighty long 'fo' dey got whar dey wuz gwine, an' Brer Rabbit say, ' Brer Wolf, dar yo' cradle, an' may it do you mo' good dan it's yever done me ! ' Brer Wolf walk all roun' de trap an' look at it like 'twuz live. Brer Rabbit thump one er his behime foots on de groun' an' Brer Wolf jump like some un done shot a gun right at 'im. Dis make Brer Rabbit laugh twel he can't laugh no mo'. Brer Wolf, he say he kinder nervous 'bout dat time er de year, an' de leas' little bit er noise 'll make 'im jump. He ax how he gwineter git any purchis on de cradle, an' Brer Rabbit say he'll hatter git inside an' walk wid it on his back, kaze dat de way he done done.

" Brer Wolf ax what all dem contraptions on de inside is, an' Brer Rabbit 'spon' dat dey er de rockers, an' dey ain't no needs fer ter be skeer'd un um, kaze dey ain't nothin' but plain wood. Brer Wolf say he ain't 'zactly skeer'd, but he done got ter de p'int whar he know dat you better look 'fo' you jump. Brer Rabbit 'low dat ef dey's any jumpin' fer ter be done, he de one ter do it, an' he talk like he done fergit what dey come fer. Brer Wolf, he fool an' fumble roun', but bimeby he walk in de cradle, sprung de trigger, an' dar he wuz ! Brer Rabbit, he holler out, ' Come on, Brer Wolf ; des hump yo'se'f, an' I'll be wid you.' But try ez he will an' grunt ez he may, Brer Wolf can't budge dat trap. Bimeby Brer Rabbit git tired er waitin', an' he say dat ef Brer Wolf ain't gwineter come on he's gwine home. He 'low dat a frien' what say he gwineter he'p you, an' den go in a cradle an' drap off ter sleep, dat's all he wanter know 'bout um ; an' wid dat he made fer de bushes, an' he wa'n't a minnit too soon, kaze here come Mr. Man fer ter see ef his trap had been sprung. He look, he did, an', sho 'nuff, it 'uz sprung, an' dey wuz sump'n in dar, too, kaze he kin hear it rustlin' roun' an' kickin' fer ter git out.

" Mr. Man look thoo de crack, an' he see Brer Wolf, which he wuz so skeer'd twel his eye look right green. Mr. Man say, ' Aha ! I got you, is I ? Brer Wolf say, ' Who ? ' Mr. Man laugh twel he

can't sca'cely talk, an' still Brer Wolf say, 'Who? Who you think you got?' Mr. Man 'low, 'I don't think, I knows. Youer ol' Brer Rabbit, dat's who you is.' Brer Wolf say, 'Turn me outer here, an' I'll show you who I is.' Mr. Man laugh fit ter kill. He 'low, 'You neenter change yo' voice; I'd know you ef I met you in de dark. Youer Brer Rabbit, dat's who you is.' Brer Wolf say, 'I ain't not; dat's what I'm not!'

"Mr. Man look thoo de crack ag'in, an' he see de short years. He 'low, 'You done cut off yo' long years, but still I knows you. Oh, yes! an' you done sharpen yo' mouf an' put smut on it—but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, 'Nobody ain't tryin' fer ter fool you. Look at my fine long bushy tail.' Mr. Man 'low, 'You done tied an'er tail on behime you, but you can't fool me. Oh no, Brer Rabbit! You can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, 'Look at de ha'r on my back; do dat look like Brer Rabbit?' Mr. Man 'low, 'You done wallered in de red san', but you can't fool me.'

"Brer Wolf say, 'Look at my long black legs; do dey look like Brer Rabbit?' Mr. Man 'low, 'You kin put an'er j'int in yo' legs, an' you kin smut um, but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, 'Look at my tushes; does dey look like Brer Rabbit?' Mr. Man 'low, 'You done got your toofies, but you can't fool me.' Brer Wolf say, 'Look at my little eyes; does dey look like Brer Rabbit?' Mr. Man 'low, 'You kin squinch yo' eye-balls, but you can't fool me, Brer Rabbit.' Brer Wolf squall out, 'I ain't not Brer Rabbit, an' yo' better turn me out er dis place so I kin take hide an' ha'r off'n Brer Rabbit.' Mr. Man say, 'Ef bofe hide an' ha'r wuz off, I'd know you, kaze 'tain't in you fer ter fool me.' An' it hurt Brer Wolf feelin's so bad fer Mr. Man ter sput his word, dat he bust out inter a big boo-boo, an' dat's 'bout all I know."

"Did the man really and truly think that Brother Wolf was Brother Rabbit?" asked the little boy.

"When you pin me down dat-a-way," responded Uncle Remus, "I'm bleeze ter tell you dat I ain't too certain an' sho' 'bout dat. De tale come down fum my great-gran'daddy's great-gran'daddy · it come on down ter my daddy, an' des ez he gun it ter me, des dat-a-way I done gun it ter you."

BRER RABBIT AND THE TAR-BABY

JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS

ONE evening recently, the lady whom Uncle Remus calls "Miss Sally" missed her little seven-year-old. Making search for him through the house and through the yard, she heard the sound of voices in the old man's cabin, and, looking through the window, saw the child sitting by Uncle Remus. His head rested against the old man's arm, and he was gazing with an expression of the most intense interest into the rough, weather-beaten face that beamed so kindly upon him. This is what "Miss Sally" heard:

"Bimeby, one day, arter Brer Fox bin doin' all dat he could fer ter ketch Brer Rabbit, en Brer Rabbit bin doin' all he could fer ter keep 'im fum it, Brer Fox say to hisse'f dat he'd put up a game on Brer Rabbit, en he ain't mo'n got de wuds out'n his mouf twel Brer Rabbit come a-lopin' up de big road, lookin' des ez plump en ez fat en ez sassy ez a Moggin hoss in a barley-patch.

"'Hol' on dar, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"'I ain't got time, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, sorter mendin' his licks.

"'I wanter have some confab wid you, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"'All right, Brer Fox, but you better holler fum whar you stan': I'm monstus full er fleas dis mawnin',' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"'I seed Brer B'ar yistiddy,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en he sorter raked me over de coals kaze you en me ain't make frens en live naberly, en I told him dat I'd see you.'

"Den Brer Rabbit scratch one year wid his off hine-foot sorter jub'usly, en den he ups en sez, sezee:

"'All a-settin', Brer Fox. S'posen you drap roun' ter-morrer en take dinner wid me. We ain't got no great doin's at our house, but I speck de ole 'oman en de chilluns kin sort o' scramble roun' en git up sump'n fer ter stay yo' stummuck.'

"'I'm 'gree'ble, Brer Rabbit,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"'Den I'll 'pen' on you,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"Nex' day, Mr. Rabbit an' Miss Rabbit got up soon, 'fo day, en

raided on a gyarden like Miss Sally's out dar, en got some cabbiges, en some roas'n-years, en some sparrer-grass, en dey fix up a smashin' dinner. Bimeby one er de little Rabbits, playin' out in de back-yard, come runnin' in hollerin', 'Oh, ma! oh, ma! I seed Mr. Fox a-comin'!' En den Brer Rabbit he tuck de chilluns by der years en make um set down, and den him en Miss Rabbit sorter dally roun' waitin' for Brer Fox. En dey keep on waitin', but no Brer Fox ain't come. Atter while Brer Rabbit goes to de do', easy like, en peep out, en dar, stickin' out fum behime de cornder, wuz de tip-een' er Brer Fox's tail. Den Brer Rabbit shot de do' en sot down, en put his paws behime his years, en begin fer ter sing:

"'De place wharbouts you spill de grease,
Right dar youer boun' ter slide,
An' whar you fine a bunch er ha'r,
You'll sholy fine de hide!'"

"Nex' day Brer Fox sont word by Mr. Mink en skuze hisse'f kaze he wuz too sick fer ter come, en he ax Brer Rabbit fer ter come en take dinner wid him, en Brer Rabbit say he wuz 'gree'ble.

"Bimeby, w'en de shadders wuz at der shortes', Brer Rabbit he sorter brush up en santer down ter Brer Fox's house, en w'en he got dar he yer somebody groanin', en he look in de do', en dar he see Brer Fox settin' up in a rockin'-cheer all wrop up wid flannil, en he look mighty weak. Brer Rabbit look all roun', he did, but he ain't see no dinner. De dish-pan wuz settin' on de table, en close by wuz a kyarvin'-knife.

"'Look like you gwineter have chicken fer dinner, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

"'Yes, Brer Rabbit, deyer nice en fresh en tender,' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit sorter pull his mustarsh, en say, 'You ain't got no' calamus-root, is you, Brer Fox? I done got so now dat I can't eat no' chicken 'ceppin' she's seasoned up wid calamus-root.' En wid dat Brer Rabbit lipt out er de do' and dodge 'mong de bushes, en sot dar watchin' fer Brer Fox; en he ain't watch long, nudder, kaze Brer Fox flung off de flannil en crope out er de house en got whar he could close in on Brer Rabbit, en bimeby Brer Rabbit holler out, 'Oh, Brer Fox! I'll des put yo' calamus-root out yer on dis yer stump. Better come git it while hit's fresh.' And wid dat Brer Rabbit gallop off home. En Brer Fox ain't never kotch 'im yit, en w'at's mo', honey, he ain't gwineter."

" Didn't the fox *never* catch the rabbit, Uncle Remus? " asked the little boy the next evening.

" He come mighty nigh it, honey, sho's you bawn—Brer Fox did. One day arter Brer Rabbit fool 'im wid dat calamus-root, Brer Fox went ter wuk en got 'im some tar, en mix it wid some turkentime, en fix up a contrapshun what he call a Tar-Baby, en he tuck dish yer Tar-Baby en he sot 'er in de big road, en den he lay off in de bushes fer ter see wat de news wuz gwineter be. En he didn't hatter wait long, nudder, kaze bimeby here come Brer Rabbit pacin' down de road—lippity-clippity, clippity-lippity—des ez sassy ez a jay-bird. Brer Fox he lay low. Brer Rabbit come prancin' 'long twel he spy de Tar-Baby, en den he fotch up on his behime legs like he was 'stonished. De Tar-Baby she sot dar, she did, en Brer Fox he lay low.

" ' Mawnin'! ' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee; ' nice wedder dis mawnin',' sezee.

" Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin' en Brer Fox he lay low.

" ' How duz yo' sym'tums seem ter segashuate? ' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee.

" Brer Fox he wink his eye slow, en lay low, en de Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin'.

" ' How you come on, den? Is you deaf? ' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. ' Kaze if you is I kin holler louder,' sezee.

" Tar-Baby lay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

" ' Youer stuck up, dat's w'at you is,' says Brer Rabbit, sezee, ' en I'm gwineter kyore you, dat's w'at I'm a-gwineter do,' sezee.

" Brer Fox he sorter chuckle in his stummuck, he did, but Tar-Baby ain't sayin' nuthin'.

" ' I'm gwineter larn you howter talk ter 'specttubble fokes ef hit's de las 'ack,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee. ' Ef you don't take off dat hat en tell me howdy, I'm gwineter bus' you wide open,' sezee.

" Tar-Baby stay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

" Brer Rabbit keep on axin' 'im, en de Tar-Baby she keep on sayin' nuthin', twel present'y Brer Rabbit draw back wid his fis', he did, en blip he tuck er side er de head. Right dar's whar he broke his merlasses-jug. His fis' stuck, en he can't pull loose. De tar hilt him. But Tar-Baby she stay still, en Brer Fox he lay low.

" ' Ef you don't lemme loose, I'll knock you ag'in,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee; en wid dat he fotch 'er a wipe wid te udder han', en dat stuck. Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin', en Brer Fox he lay low.

" ' Tu'n me loose, fo' I kick de natal stuffin' outen you,' sez Brer

Rabbit, sezee; but de Tar-Baby she ain't sayin' nuthin'. She des hilt on, en den Brer Rabbit lose de use er his feet in de same way. Brer Fox he lay low. Den Brer Rabbit squall out dat ef de Tar-Baby don't tu'n 'im loose he butt 'er crank-sided. En den he butted, en his head got stuck. Den Brer Fox he santered fort', lookin' des ez innercent ez wunner yo' mammy's mockin'-birds.

" ' Howdy, Brer Rabbit ? ' sez Brer Fox, sezee. ' You look sorter stuck up dis mawnin',' sezee; en den he rolled on de groun', en laft en laft twel he couldn't laff no mo'. ' I speck you'll take dinner wid me dis time, Brer Rabbit. I done laid in some calamus-root, en I ain't gwineter take no skuse,' sez Brer Fox, sezee."

Here Uncle Remus paused, and drew a two-pound yam out of the ashes.

" Did the fox eat the rabbit ? " asked the little boy to whom the story had been told.

" Dat's all de fur de tale goes," replied the old man. " He mout, en den ag'in he moutent. Some say Jedge B'ar come 'long en loosed 'im; some say he didn't. I hear Miss Sally callin'. You better run 'long." . . .

" Uncle Remus," said the little boy one evening, when he had found the old man with little or nothing to do, " did the fox kill and eat the rabbit when he caught him with the Tar-Baby ? "

" Law, honey, ain't I tell you 'bout dat ? " replied the old darky, chuckling slyly. " I 'clar ter grashus I ought er tole you dat; but ole man Nod wuz ridin' on my eyelids twel a leetle mo'n I'd 'a' dis'member'd my own name, en den on to dat here come yo' mammy hollerin' atter you.

" W'at I tell you w'en I fus' begin ? I tole you Brer Rabbit wuz a monstus soon beas'; leas'ways dat's w'at I laid out fer ter tell you. Well, den, honey, don't you go en make no udder kalkalashuns, kaze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his family wuz at de head er de gang w'en enny racket wuz on han', en dar dey stayed. 'Fo' you begins fer ter wipe yo' eyes 'bout Brer Rabbit, you wait en see whar'bouts Brer Rabbit gwineter fetch up at. But dat's needer yer ner dar.

" W'en Brer Fox fine Brer Rabbit mixt up wid de Tar-Baby, he feel mighty good, en he roll on de groun' en laff. Bimeby he up 'n' say, sezee:

" Well, I speck I got you dis time, Brer Rabbit,' sezee; ' maybe I ain't but I speck I is. You been runnin' roun' here sassin' atter me a mighty long time, but I speck you done come ter de een' er de

row. You bin cuttin' up yo' capers en boucin' roun' in dis naberhood ontwel you come ter b'leeve yo'se'f de boss er de whole gang. En den youer allers some'rs whar you got no bizness,' sez Brer Fox, sezee. 'Who ax you fer ter come en strike up a 'quaintence wid dish yer Tar-Baby? En who stuck you up dar whar you iz? Nobody in de roun' worril. You des tuck en jam yo'se'f on dat Tar-Baby widout waitin' fer enny invite,' sez Brer Fox, sezee—'en dar you is, en dar you'll stay twel I fixes up a bresh-pile and fires her up, kaze I'm gwineter bobbycue you dis day, sho',' sez Brer Fox, sezee.

"Den Brer Rabbit talk mighty 'umble.

"'I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'so you don't fling me in dat brier-patch. Roas' me, Brer Fox,' sezee, 'but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'Hit's so much trouble fer ter kindle a fier,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'dat I speck I'll hatter hang you,' sezee.

"'Hang me des ez high ez you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'but do fer de Lord's sake don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'I ain't got no string,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter drown you,' sezee.

"'Drown me ez deep ez you please, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'but don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"'Dey ain't no water nigh,' sez Brer Fox, sezee, 'en now I speck I'll hatter skin you,' sezee.

"'Skin me, Brer Fox,' sez Brer Rabbit, sezee, 'snatch out my eyeballs, t'ar out my years by de roots, en cut off my legs,' sezee, 'but do please, Brer Fox, don't fling me in dat brier-patch,' sezee.

"Co'se Brer Fox wanter hurt Brer Rabbit bad ez he kin, so he cotch him by de behime legs en slung 'im right in de middle er de brier-patch. Dar wuz a considerbul flutter whar Brer Rabbit struck de bushes, en Brer Fox sorter hang roun' fer ter see what wuz gwineter happen. Bimeby he hear somebody call 'im, en way up de hill he see Brer Rabbit settin' cross-legged on a chinkapin log koamin' de pitch outen his har wid a chip. Den Brer Fox know dat he bin swop off mighty bad. Brer Rabbit wuz bleedzed fer ter fling back some er his sass, en he holler out:

"'Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox; bred en bawn in a brier-patch!' en wid dat he skip out des ez lively ez a cricket in de embers."

KATHERINE S. B. McDOWELL
1849–1883

HIERONYMUS POP AND THE BABY

"NOW, 'Onymus Pop," said the mother of that gentle boy, "you jist take care of dis chile while I'm gone to the hangin'. An' don't you leave dis house on no account, not if de skies fall an' de earth opens to swaller yer."

Hieronymus grunted gloomily. He thought it a burning shame that he should not go to the hanging; but never had his mother been willing that he should have the least pleasure in life. It was either to tend the baby, or mix the cow's food, or to card wool, or cut wood, or to pick a chicken, or wash up the floor, or to draw water, or to sprinkle down the clothes—always something. When everything else failed, she had a way, that seemed to her son simply demoniac, of setting him at the alphabet. To be sure, she did not know the letters herself, but her teaching was none the less vigorous.

"What's dat, 'Onymus?" she would say, pointing at random with her snuff brush to a letter.

"Q"—with a sniff.

Woe be unto young Pop if he faltered, and said it *might* be a Z. Mother Pop kept a rod ready, and used it as if she was born for nothing else. Naturally, he soon learned to stick brazenly to his first guess. But unfortunately he could not remember from one day to another what he had said; and his mother learned, after a time, to distinguish the forms of the letters, and to know that a curly letter called S on Tuesday could not possibly be a square-shaped E on Thursday. Her faith once shattered, 'Onymus had to suffer in the usual way.

The lad had been taught at spasmodic intervals by his sister Savannah—commonly called Sissy—who went to school, put on airs, and was always clean. Therefore Hieronymus hated her. Mother Pop herself was a little in awe of her accomplished daughter, and would ask her no questions, even when most in doubt as to which was which of the letters G and C.

"A pretty thing!" she would mutter to herself, "if I must be a-learnin' things from my own chile, dat wuz' de mos' colicky baby I ever had, an' cos' me unheerd-of miseries in de time of her teethin'."

It seemed to Hieronymus that the climax of his impositions had come, when he was forced to stay at home and mind the baby, while his mother and the rest of them trotted off, gay as larks, to see a man hanged. It was a hot afternoon, and the unwilling nurse suffered. The baby wouldn't go to sleep. He put it on the bed—a feather-bed—and why it didn't drop off to sleep, as a proper baby should, was more than the tired soul of Hieronymus could tell. He did everything to soothe Tiddlekins. (The infant had not been named as yet, and by way of affection they addressed it as Tiddlekins.) He even went so far as to wave the flies away from it with a mulberry branch for the space of five or ten minutes. But as it still fretted and tossed, he let it severely alone, and the flies settled on the little black thing as if it had been a licorice stick.

After a while Tiddlekins grew aggressive, and began to yell. Hieronymus, who had almost found consolation in the contemplation of a bloody picture pasted on the wall, cut from the weekly paper of a wicked city, was deprived even of this solace. He picked up "de miserable little screech-owl," as he called it in his wrath. He trotted it. He sang to it the soothing ditty of—

"'Tain't never gwine to rain no mo';
Sun shines down on rich and po'."

But all was vain. Finally, in despair, he undressed Tiddlekins. He had heard his mother say: 'Of'en and of'en when a chile is a-scream' its breff away, 't ain't nothin' ails it 'cep'n *pins*."

But there were no pins. Plenty of strings and hard knots; but not a pin to account for the antics of the unhappy Tiddlekins.

How it *did* scream! It lay on the stiffly braced knees of Hieronymus, and puckered up its face so tightly that it looked as if it had come fresh from a wrinkle mould. There were no tears, but sharp regular yells, and rollings of its head, and a distracting monotony in its performances.

"Dis here chile looks 's if it's got de measles," muttered Hi, gazing on the squirming atom with calm eyes of despair. Then, running his fingers over the neck and breast of the small Tiddlekins, he cried, with the air of one who makes a discovery, "It's got de heat! *Dat's* what ails Tiddlekins!"

There was really a little breaking out on the child's body that might account for his restlessness and squalls. And it was *such* a hot day! Perspiration streamed down Hi's back, while his head was dry. There was not a quiver in the tree leaves, and the silver poplars showed only

their leaden side. The sunflowers were drooping their big heads ; the flies seemed to stick to the window-panes, and were too languid to crawl.

Hieronymus had in him the materials of which philosophers are made. He said to himself, " 'Tain't nothin' but heat dat's de matter wid dis baby ; so uf *cose* he ought to be cooled off."

But how to cool him off—that was the great question. Hi knitted his dark brows and thought intently.

It happened that the chiefest treasure of the Pop estate was a deep old well, that in the hottest days yielded water as refreshing as iced champagne. The neighbours all made a convenience of the Pop well. And half-way down its long cool hollow hung, pretty much all of the time, milk cans, butter pats, fresh meats—all things that needed to be kept cool in summer days. He looked at the hot, squirming, wretched black baby on his lap ; then he looked at the well ; and, simple, straightforward lad that he was, he put this and that together.

" If I was ter hang Tiddlekins down de well," he reflected, " 't wouldn't be mo' dan three jumps of a flea befo' he's as cool as Christmas." With this quick-witted youth to think was to act. Before many minutes he had stuffed poor little Tiddlekins into the well bucket, though it must be mentioned to his credit that he tied the baby securely in with his own suspenders.

Warmed up with his exertions, content in this good riddance of such bad rubbish as Tiddlekins, Hieronymus reposed himself on the feather-bed, and dropped off into a sweet slumber. From this he was aroused by the voice of a small boy.

" Hello, Hi ! I say, Hi Pop ! whar is yer ? "

" Here I is," cried Hi, starting up. " What you want ? "

Little Jim Rogers stood in the doorway. " Towzer's dog," he said, in great excitement, " and daddy's bull-pup is gwine ter have a fight dis evenin'. Come on quick, if yer wants ter see de fun."

Up jumped Hi, and the two boys were off like a flash. *Not one thought to Tiddlekins in the well bucket.*

In due time the Pop family got home, and Mother Pop, fanning herself, was indulging in the moral reflections suitable to the occasion, when she checked herself suddenly, exclaiming, "But, land o' Jerusalem! whar's 'Onymus an' de baby ? "

" I witnessed Hieronymus," said the elegant Savannah, " as I wandered from school. He was with a multitude of boys, who cheered, without a sign of disap*per*ation, two canine beasts, that tore each other in deadly feud."

" Yer don't mean ter say, Sissy, dat 'Onymus Pop is gone ter a dog-fight ? "

" Such are my meaning," said Sissy, with dignity.

" Den *whar's* de baby ? " For answer, a long low wail smote upon their ears, as Savannah would have said.

" Fan me ! " cried Mother Pop. " Dat's Tiddlekins' voice."

" Never min' about fannin' mammy," cried Weekly, Savannah's twin, a youth of fifteen, who could read, and was much addicted to gory tales of thunder and blood ; " let's fin' de baby. P'r'aps he's been murdered by dat ruffian Hi, an' dat's his *ghos'* dat we hears a-callin'."

A search was instituted—under the bed, in the bed, in the wash-tub and the soup kettle ; behind the wood-pile, and in the pea vines ; up the chimney, and in the ash-hopper ; but all in vain. No Tiddlekins appeared, though still they heard him cry.

" Shade of Ole Hickory ! " cried the father Pop, " whar, whar is dat chile ? " Then, with a sudden lighting of the eye : " Unchain de dog," said he ; " he'll smell him out."

There was a superannuated bloodhound pertaining to the Pop ménage that they kept tied up all day under a delusion that he was fierce. They unchained this wild animal, and with many kicks endeavoured to goad his nostrils to their duty.

It happened that a piece of fresh pork hung in the well, and Lord Percy—so was the dog called—was hungry. So he hurried with vivacity toward the fresh pork.

" De well ! " shrieked Mother Pop, tumbling down all in a heap, and looking somehow like Turner's " Slave-Ship," as one stumpy leg protruded from the wreck of red flannel and ruffled petticoats.

" What shall we do ? " said Sissy, with a helpless squeak.

" Why, git him out," said Mr. Pop, who was the practical one of the family.

He began to draw up the well bucket, aided by Weekly, who whispered darkly : " Dar'll be anudder hangin' in town befo' long, *and Hi won't miss dat hangin'*."

Soon appeared a little woolly hat, then half a black body, the rest of him being securely wedged in the well bucket. He looked like a jack-in-the-box. But he was cool, Tiddlekins was, no doubt of that. Mother Pop revived at sight of her offspring, still living, and feebly sucking his thumb.

" Ef we had a whisky bath ter put him in ! " she cried

Into the house flew Father Pop, seized the quart cup, and was over to the white house on the hill in the wink of a cat's eye.

" He stammered forth his piteous tale," said Savannah, telling the story the next day to her schoolmates ; " and Judge Chambers himself filled his cup with the best of Bourbon, and Miss Clara came over to see us resusirate the infant."

Mother Pop had Tiddlekins wrapped in hot flannel when he got back ; and with a never-to-be-sufficiently-admired economy Mr. Pop moistened a rag with " the best of Bourbon," and said to his wife, " Jes rub him awhile, Cynthy, an' see if dat won't bring him roun'."

As she rubbed, he absent-mindedly raised the quart cup to his lips, and with three deep and grateful gulps the whisky bath went to refresh the inner man of Tiddlekins' papa.

Then who so valorous and so affectionate as he ? Dire were his threats against Hieronymus, deep his lamentations over his child.

" My po' little lammie ! " he sobbed. " Work away, Cynthy. Dat chile mus' be saved, even if I should have ter go over ter de judge's for anudder quart o' whisky. Nuthin' shall be spared to save that preciousest kid o' my ole age."

Miss Clara did not encourage his self-sacrificing proposal ; but for all that, it was not long before Tiddlekins grew warm and lively, and winked at his father—so that good old man declared—as he lay on his back, placidly sucking a pig's tail. Savannah had roasted it in the ashes, and it had been cut from the piece of pork that had shared the well with Tiddlekins. The pork belonged to a neighbour, by the way ; but at such a time the Pop family felt that they might dispense with the vain and useless ceremony of asking for it.

The excitement was over, the baby asleep, Miss Clara gone, and the sun well on its way to China, when a small figure was seen hovering about the gate. It had a limp air of dejection, and seemed to feel some delicacy about coming further.

" The miscreant is got back," remarked Savannah.

" Hironymus," calls Mrs. Pop, " you may thank yo' heavenly stars dat you ain't a murderer dis summer day——"

" A-waitin' ter be hung nex' wild-grape-time," finished Weekly pleasantly.

Mr. Pop said nothing. But he reached down from the mantelshelf a long thin something, shaped like a snake, and quivered it in the air.

Then he walked out to Hi, and taking him by the left ear, led him to the wood-pile. And here——But I draw a veil.

LAFCADIO HEARN
1850–1904

THE SOUL OF THE GREAT BELL

THE water-clock marks the hour in the *Tachung sz'*, in the Tower of the Great Bell: now the mallet is lifted to smite the lips of the metal monster—the vast lips inscribed with Buddhist texts from the sacred *Fa-hwa-King*, from the chapters of the holy *Ling-yen-King!* Hear the great bell responding!—how mighty her voice, though tongueless! *KO-NGAI!* All the little dragons on the high-tilted eaves of the green roofs shiver to the tips of their gilded tails under that deep wave of sound; all the porcelain gargoyles tremble on their carven perches; all the hundred little bells of the pagodas quiver with desire to speak. *KO-NGAI*—all the green-and-gold tiles of the temple are vibrating; the wooden goldfish above them are writhing against the sky; the uplifted finger of Fo shakes high over the heads of the worshippers through the blue fog of incense! *KO-NGAI!*—What a thunder tone was that! All the lacquered goblins on the palace cornices wriggle their fire-coloured tongues! And after each huge shock, how wondrous the multiple echo and the great golden moan, and, at last, the sudden sibilant sobbing in the ears when the immense tone faints away in broken whispers of silver, as though a woman should whisper, "*Hiai!*" Even so the great bell hath sounded every day for well-nigh five hundred years—*Ko-Ngai:* first with stupendous clang, then with immeasurable moan of gold, then with silver murmuring of "*Hiai!*" And there is not a child in all the many-coloured ways of the old Chinese city who does not know the story of the great bell, who cannot tell you why the great bell says *Ko-Ngai* and *Hiai!*

Now this is the story of the great bell in the *Tachung sz'*, as the same is related in the *Pe-Hiao-Tou-Choue*, written by the learned Yu-Pao-Tchen, of the City of Kwang-tchau-fu.

. . . . . .

Nearly five hundred years ago the Celestially August, the Son of Heaven, Yong-Lo, of the "Illustrious" or Ming dynasty, commanded the worthy official Kouan-Yu that he should have a bell made of such size that the sound thereof might be heard for one hundred *li*. And he further ordained that the voice of the bell should

be strengthened with brass, and deepened with gold, and sweetened with silver ; and that the face and the great lips of it should be graven with blessed sayings from the sacred books, and that it should be suspended in the centre of the imperial capital, to sound through all the many-coloured ways of the City of Pe-King.

Therefore the worthy mandarin Kouan-Yu assembled the master-moulders and the renowned bellsmiths of the empire, and all men of great repute and cunning in foundry work ; and they measured the materials for the alloy, and treated them skilfully, and prepared the moulds, the fires, the instruments, and the monstrous melting-pot for fusing the metal. And they laboured exceedingly, like giants, neglecting only rest and sleep and the comforts of life ; toiling both night and day in obedience to Kouan-Yu, and striving in all things to do the behest of the Son of Heaven.

But when the metal had been cast, and the earthen mould separated from the glowing casting, it was discovered that, despite their great labour and ceaseless care, the result was void of worth ; for the metals had rebelled one against the other—the gold had scorned alliance with the brass, the silver would not mingle with the molten iron. Therefore the moulds had to be once more prepared, and the fires rekindled, and the metal remelted, and all the work tediously and toilsomely repeated. The Son of Heaven heard and was angry, but spake nothing.

A second time the bell was cast, and the result was even worse. Still the metals obstinately refused to blend one with the other ; and there was no uniformity in the bell, and the sides of it were cracked and fissured, and the lips of it were slagged and split asunder ; so that all the labour had to be repeated even a third time, to the great dismay of Kouan-Yu. And when the Son of Heaven heard these things, he was angrier than before ; and sent his messenger to Kouan-Yu with a letter, written upon lemon-coloured silk and sealed with the seal of the dragon, containing these words :

" From the Mighty Yong-Lo, the Sublime Tait-Sung, the Celestial and August, whose reign is called ' Ming,' to Kouan-Yu the Fuh-yin : Twice thou hast betrayed the trust we have deigned graciously to place in thee ; if thou fail a third time in fulfilling our command, thy head shall be severed from thy neck. Tremble, and obey ! "

. . . . . .

Now, Kouan-Yu had a daughter of dazzling loveliness whose name —Ko-Ngai—was ever in the mouths of poets, and whose heart was even more beautiful than her face. Ko-Ngai loved her father with

such love that she had refused a hundred worthy suitors rather than make his home desolate by her absence ; and when she had seen the awful yellow missive, sealed with the Dragon-Seal, she fainted away with fear for her father's sake. And when her senses and her strength returned to her, she could not rest or sleep for thinking of her parent's danger, until she had secretly sold some of her jewels, and with the money so obtained had hastened to an astrologer, and paid him a great price to advise her by what means her father might be saved from the peril impending over him. So the astrologer made observations of the heavens, and marked the aspect of the Silver Stream (which we call the Milky Way), and examined the signs of the Zodiac —the *Hwang-tao*, or Yellow Road—and consulted the table of the Five *Hin*, or Principles of the Universe, and the mystical books of the alchemists. And after a long silence, he made answer to her, saying : " Gold and brass will never meet in wedlock, silver and iron never will embrace, until the flesh of a maiden be melted in the crucible ; until the blood of a virgin be mixed with the metals in their fusion." So Ko-Ngai returned home sorrowful at heart ; but she kept secret all that she had heard, and told no one what she had done.

. . . . . .

At last came the awful day when the third and last effort to cast the great bell was to be made ; and Ko-Ngai, together with her waiting-woman, accompanied her father to the foundry, and they took their places upon a platform overlooking the toiling of the moulders and the lava of liquefied metal. All the workmen wrought at their tasks in silence ; there was no sound heard but the muttering of the fires. And the muttering deepened into a roar like the roar of typhoons approaching, and the blood-red lake of metal slowly brightened like the vermilion of a sunrise, and the vermilion was transmuted into a radiant glow of gold, and the gold whitened blindingly, like the silver face of a full moon. Then the workers ceased to feed the raving flame, and all fixed their eyes upon the eyes of Kouan-Yu ; and Kouan-Yu prepared to give the signal to cast.

But ere ever he lifted his finger, a cry caused him to turn his head ; and all heard the voice of Ko-Ngai sounding sharply sweet as a bird's song above the great thunder of the fires—" *For thy sake, O my father !* " And even as she cried, she leaped into the white flood of metal ; and the lava of the furnace roared to receive her, and spattered monstrous flakes of flame to the roof, and burst over the verge of the earthen crater, and cast up a whirling fountain of many-coloured fires, and

subsided quakingly, with lightnings and with thunders and with mutterings.

Then the father of Ko-Ngai, wild with his grief, would have leaped in after her, but that strong men held him back and kept firm grasp upon him until he had fainted away, and they could bear him like one dead to his home. And the serving-woman of Ko-Ngai, dizzy and speechless for pain, stood before the furnace, still holding in her hands a shoe, a tiny, dainty shoe, with embroidery of pearls and flowers —the shoe of her beautiful mistress that was. For she had sought to grasp Ko-Ngai by the foot as she leaped, but had only been able to clutch the shoe, and the pretty shoe came off in her hand; and she continued to stare at it like one gone mad.

. . . . . .

But in spite of all these things, the command of the Celestial and August had to be obeyed, and the work of the moulders to be finished, hopeless as the result might be. Yet the glow of the metal seemed purer and whiter than before; and there was no sign of the beautiful body that had been entombed therein. So the ponderous casting was made; and lo! when the metal had become cool, it was found that the bell was beautiful to look upon and perfect in form, and wonderful in colour above all other bells. Nor was there any trace found of the body of Ko-Ngai; for it had been totally absorbed by the precious alloy, and blended with the well-blended brass and gold, with the intermingling of the silver and the iron. And when they sounded the bell, its tones were found to be deeper and mellower and mightier than the tones of any other bell, reaching even beyond the distance of one hundred *li*, like a pealing of summer thunder; and yet also like some vast voice uttering a name, a woman's name, the name of Ko-Ngai.

. . . . . .

And still, between each mighty stroke there is a long low moaning heard; and ever the moaning ends with a sound of sobbing and of complaining, as though a weeping woman should murmur, "*Hiai!*" And still, when the people hear that great golden moan they keep silence, but when the sharp, sweet shuddering comes in the air, and the sobbing of "*Hiai!*" then, indeed, do all the Chinese mothers in all the many-coloured ways of Pe-King whisper to their little ones: "*Listen! that is Ko-Ngai crying for her shoe! That is Ko-Ngai calling for her shoe!*"

MARY STEWART CUTTING
B. 1851

THE HAPPIEST TIME

"AREN'T you coming to church with me this morning?"

"Well—not *this* morning, I think, petty."

"You *said* you would."

"Yes, I know I did, but I have a slight cold. I don't think it would be best for me, really, petty. I've been working pretty hard this week." Mr. Belmore carefully deposited a pile of newspapers beside his armchair upon the floor of the little library, removing and opening the top layer for perusal as he spoke, his eyes already glued to the headlines. "A quiet day will do me lots of good. I'll tell you what it is—I'll promise to go with you next Sunday if you say so."

"You always promise you'll go next Sunday." Mrs. Belmore, a brown-haired, clear-eyed young woman in a blue and white spotted morning gown, looked doubtfully, yet with manifest yielding, at her husband. Mr. Belmore presented the radiantly clean and peaceful aspect of the man who has risen at nine o'clock instead of the customary seven, and bathed and dressed in the sweet unhurried calm that belongs only to the first day of the week, poking dilatorily among chiffonier drawers, discovering hitherto forgotten garments in his closet, and leisurely fumbling over a change of shirt-studs before coming down to consume the breakfast kept waiting for him.

"Of course I know it's your only day at home—" Mrs. Belmore reverted to her occupation of deftly setting the chairs in their rightful places, and straightening the books on the tables. "I suppose I *ought* to insist on your going—when you promised—but still—" She gave a sigh of relinquishment. "I suppose you *do* need the rest," she added. "We can have a nice afternoon together, anyway. You can finish reading that story aloud, and we'll go out and take a good look at the garden. I think the beans were planted too close under the pear tree last year—that was the reason they didn't come up right. Edith Barnes and Alan Wilson are coming out from town after dinner for the rest of the day, but that won't make any difference to us."

"*What?*"

"Now, Herbert, how could I help asking them? You know the boarding-house she and her mother live in. Edith never gets a chance to see him alone. They're saving up now to get married—they've been engaged a year—so he can't spend any more money for theatres and things, and they just have to walk and walk the streets, unless they go visiting, and they've been almost everywhere, Edith says. She wrote and asked me to have them for this Sunday; he's been away for a whole week somewhere up in the State. I think it's pathetic." In the warmth of explanation Mrs. Belmore had unwittingly removed the pile of newspapers from the floor to an ottoman at the farther end of the room. "Edith says she knows it's the happiest time of their lives, and she does want to get some of the benefit of it, poor girl."

"What do they want to be engaged for anyway?"

"*Herbert!* How ridiculous! You are the most unreasonable man at times for a sensible one that I ever laid my eyes on. Why did *we* want to be engaged?"

"That was different." Mr. Belmore's tone conveyed a permanent satisfaction with his own case. "If every woman were like you, petty—I never *could* stand Edith, she's one of your clever girls; there's something about her that always sets my teeth on edge. As for Wilson—oh, Wilson's just a usual kind of a fool, like myself. Hello, where are my newspapers—and what in thunder makes it so cold? You don't mean to say you've got the window open?"

Mrs. Belmore had a habit of airing the rooms in the morning, which her husband approved of theoretically, and combated intensely in practice. After the window was banged shut she could hear him rattling at the furnace below to turn on an extra flow of heat before settling down once more in comfort. Although the April sun was bright, there was still a chill in the air.

She looked in upon him, gowned and bonneted for church, sweet and placid of mien, followed by two little girls, brave in their Sunday best, all big hats and ribboned hair and little starchy ruffles showing below their brown coats. Mrs. Belmore stooped over her husband's chair to kiss him good-bye.

"You won't have to talk to Edith and Alan at all," she said, as if continuing the conversation from where thy had left off. "All we have to do is to let them have the parlour or the library. They'll entertain each other."

"Oh, don't you bother about that. Now go ahead or you'll be

late; and don't forget to say your prayers for me, too. That's right always go to church with your mother, girlies."

"I *wish* you were going, too." Mrs. Belmore looked at her husband lingeringly.

"I wish I were, petty," said Mr. Belmore, with a prompt mendacity so evidently inspired by affection that his wife condoned it at once.

She thought of him more than once during the service with generous satisfaction in his comfortable morning. She wished she had thought it right to remain at home, too, as she did sometimes, but there were the children to be considered. But she and Herbert would have the afternoon together, and take part of it to see about planting the garden, a plot of twenty feet square in the rear of the suburban villa.

The Sunday visit to the garden was almost a sacrament. They might look at it on other days, but it was only on Sunday, beginning with the early spring, that husband and wife strolled around the little patch together, first planning where to start the summer crop of vegetables and afterward watching the green things poking their spikes up through the mould, and growing, growing. He did the planting and working in the long light evenings after he came home, while she held the papers of seeds for him; but it was only on Sunday that he could really watch the green things grow, and learn to know each separate leaf intimately, and count the blossoms on the beans and the cucumbers. From the pure pleasure of the first radish, through all the various wiltings and shrivellings incident to amateur gardening in summer deluge and drought, to the triumphant survival of tomato plants and cucumber vines, running riot over everything in the fall of the year, the little garden played its old part as paradise to these two, who became more fully one in the watching of the miracle of growth. When they gathered the pears from the little tree in the corner of the plot, before the frost, and picked the few little green tomatoes that remained on the dwindling stems, it was like garnering a store of peaceful happiness. Every stage of the garden was a romance. Mrs. Belmore could go to church without her husband, but to have him survey the garden without her would have been the touch beyond.

It must be horrid, anyway, she thought, to have to go every morning into town in those smoky cars and crowded ferry-boats; just to run into town twice a week tired her out. Now he would have finished his paper—now little Dorothy would have come in, red-cheeked from her walk, to kiss daddy before her nap—now he must be pottering around

among his possessions and looking out for her. She knew so well how he would look when he came to the door to meet her. The sudden sight of either one to the other always shed a reflected light, like the glow of the sun. It was with a feeling of wonder that she marked its disappearance, after a brief gleam, as he not only opened the door, but came out on the piazza to greet her, and closed it behind him.

"They're in there—Edith and Alan." He pointed over his shoulder with his thumb. "I thought they weren't coming until after dinner."

"Why, they weren't."

"Well, they're in the parlour, just the same. Came out over an hour ago. Great Scot, I wished I'd gone with you. I'm worn out."

"You don't mean to say you've stayed with them all the time!" Mrs. Belmore looked scandalised.

"I should say I had; I couldn't lose 'em. Whichever room I went to they followed; at least she did and he came after. I went from pillar to post, I give you my word, petty, but Edith had me by the neck; she never let go her grip for an instant. They won't speak to each other, you see; only to me. I haven't had a chance to even finish the paper. I've had the deuce of a time! I don't know what you are going to do about it."

"Never mind; it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore reassuringly. She pushed past him into the parlour, where sat a tall, straight girl with straight, light brows, a long straight nose, and a straight mouth with a droop at the corners. In the room beyond, a thickset, dark young man with glasses and a nervous expression was looking at pictures. It did not require a Solomon to discover at a glance how the land lay.

If Mrs. Belmore had counted easily on her powers of conciliation, she was disappointed this time. After the dinner, whereat the conversation was dragged laboriously round four sides of a square, except when the two little girls made some slight diversion, and the several futile attempts when the meal was over to leave the lovers alone together, Mrs. Belmore resigned herself, perforce, to the loss of her cherished afternoon.

"It's no use; we'll have to give up the reading," she said to her husband rapidly, in one of her comings and goings. "Perhaps later, dear. But it's really dreadful; here we've been talking of religion and beet-root sugar and smallpox, when any one can see that her heart is breaking."

" I think he is getting the worst of it," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

" Oh, it won't hurt *him*."

" Well, you've given them plenty of opportunities to make up."

" Yes ; but he doesn't know how."

She added in a louder tone, " You take Mr. Wilson up to your den for a while, Herbert ; Edith and I are going to have a cosy little time with the children ; aren't we, dear ? "

" Have a cigar ? " said Mr. Belmore as the two men seated themselves comfortably in a couple of wooden armchairs in the sunny little apartment hung with a miscellaneous collection of guns, swords, and rods, the drawing of a bloated trout, and a dusty pair of antlers.

" Thank you ; I'm not smoking now," said Mr. Wilson, with a hungry look at the open box on the table beside him.

" Oh ! " said his host genially, " so you're at that stage of the game. Well, I've been there myself. You have my sympathy. But this won't last, you know."

" Does your wife like smoking ? "

" Loves it," said Mr. Belmore, sinking the fact of his official limit to four cigars a day. " That is, of course, she thinks it's a dirty habit, and unhealthy, and all that sort of thing, you know ; but it doesn't make any *difference* to her—not a pin's worth. Cheer up, old fellow ; you'll get to this place, too."

" Looks like it," said the other bitterly. " Here I haven't seen her for a week—I came two hundred miles on purpose yesterday, and now she won't even look at me. I don't know what's the matter—haven't the least idea—and I can't *get* her to tell me. I have to be off to-morrow at seven o'clock, too—I call it pretty hard lines."

" Let me see," said Mr. Belmore judicially, knitting his brows as if burrowing into the past as he smoked. " Perhaps I can help you out. What have you been writing to her ? Telling her all about what you've been doing, and just sending your love at the end ? They don't like that, you know."

Mr. Wilson shook his head. " No ; upon my soul, I've done nothing but tell her how I—how I was looking forward to—oh, hang it, Belmore, the letters have been all *right*, I know that."

" H'm," said Mr. Belmore, " there's got to be *something* back of it, you know. Seen any girls since you've been gone ? "

Mr. Wilson hastened to shake his head more emphatically than before. " Not one," he asseverated, with the relief of complete

innocence. "Didn't even meet a soul I knew, except Brower—you remember Dick Brower? I went into a jeweller's to get my glasses mended, and found him buying a souvenir spoon for his fiancée."

"O—o—h!" said Mr. Belmore intelligently, "and did you buy a present for Edith?"

"No, I didn't. She made me promise not to buy anything more for her; she thinks I'm spending too much money, and that I ought to economise."

"And did you tell her about Brower?"

"Why, of course I did—as we were coming out this morning."

Mr. Wilson stared blankly at his friend.

"Chump!" said Mr. Belmore. He bit off the end of a new cigar and threw it away. "Wilson, my poor fellow, you're so besotted in ignorance that I don't know how to let the light in on you. A man is a fool by the side of his fiancée, anyhow."

"I don't know what you mean," said the bewildered Wilson stiffly. "*I* don't know what I'm to do."

"No, of course you don't—but Edith does—you can just trust her for that. A girl *always* knows what a man ought to do—she can give him cards and spades and beat him every time."

"Then why doesn't she *tell* me what she wants? I asked her to, particularly."

"Oh, no! She'll tell you everything the opposite—that is, half the time. She'll put every obstacle possible in your way, to see if you're man enough to walk over 'em; that's what she wants to find out; if you're man enough to have your own way in spite of her; and, of course, if you aren't, you're an awful disappointment."

"Are you sure?" said Mr. Wilson deeply, after an awestruck pause. "Half the time, you say. But how am I to find out when she means—I give you my word, Belmore, that I thought—I suppose I could have brought her a small present, anyway, in spite of what she said; a souvenir spoon—but she hates souvenir spoons."

"You'll have to cipher it out for yourself, old man," said Mr. Belmore. "*I* don't set out to interpret any woman's moods. I only give you cold, bare facts. But if I were you," he added impartially, "I'd go down after a while and try and get her alone, you know, and say something. You can, if you try." A swish of skirts outside of the open door made Mr. Wilson jump forward as Mrs. Belmore came in sight with her friend. The latter had her arm around the older woman,

and her form drooped toward her as they passed the two men. The eyes of the girl were red, and her lips had a patient quiver. Mr. Wilson gave an exclamation and sprang forward as she disappeared in the farther room.

It was some hours later that the husband and wife met unexpectedly upon the stairs with a glad surprise.

"You don't mean to say it's you—alone!" he whispered.

"Wait—is she coming up?" They clutched each other spasmodically as they listened to the sound of a deflecting footstep. There was a breathless moment, and then the chords of a funeral march boomed forth upon the air. The loud pedal was doing its best to supplement those long and strenuous fingers.

The listeners breathed a sigh of relief.

"He's gone to the station for a time-table," whispered the husband, with a delighted grin; "though I can stand *him* all right. We had a nice walk with the little girls, after he got tired of playing hide-and-seek. I wished you were with us. You must be about used up. How are you getting along with her?"

"Oh, pretty well." She let herself be drawn down on the hall window seat at the top of the landing. "You see, Edith really feels dreadfully, poor girl."

"What about?"

"Herbert, she isn't really sure that she loves him."

"Isn't sure! After they've been engaged for a year!"

"That's just it. She says if they had been married out of hand, in the first flush of the novelty, she wouldn't have had time, perhaps, to have any doubts. But it's the seeing him all the time that's made her think."

"Made her think *what*?"

"Whether she loves him or not; whether they are really suited. I remember that I used to feel that way about you, dear. Oh, you know, Herbert, it's a very serious thing for a girl. She says she knows her whole life is at stake; she thinks about it all the time."

"How about his?"

"Well, that's what I said," admitted Mrs. Belmore. "She says that she feels that *he* is so rational and self-poised that she makes little difference in his life either way—it has come to her all at once. She says his looking at everything in a matter-of-fact way just chills her; she longs for a whole-souled enthusiasm that can sweep everything

before it. She feels that if they are married she will have to keep up the ideal for both of them, and she doesn't know whether she can."

"No, she can't," said Mr. Belmore.

"She says she could if she loved him enough," pursued Mrs. Belmore. "It's the *if* that kills her. She says that when she wakes up in the morning she feels as if she'd die if she didn't see him before night, and when she *does* see him it's all a dreadful disappointment to her; she can't talk to him at all, she feels perfectly hard and stony; then, the moment he's gone, she's crazy to have him back again. She cries herself thin over it."

"She's pretty bony, anyway," said Mr. Belmore impartially.

"Even his appearance changes to her. She says sometimes he looks like a Greek god, so that she could go down on her knees to him, and at other times— Once she happened to catch a glimpse of him in a horrid red sweater, polishing his shoes, and she said she didn't get over it for weeks; he looked positively *ordinary*—like some of the men you see in the trolley cars."

"Oh, good gracious!" protested Mr. Belmore feebly. "Oh, good *gracious*, petty! This is *too* much."

"Hush—don't laugh so loud—be quiet," said his wife anxiously.

"If Wilson *ever* looks like a Greek god to her, she's all right, she loves him—you can tell her so for me. *Wilson!* Here are we sitting up here like a pair of lovers, and they— Hello!"

The hall door opened and shut, the piano lid closed simultaneously with a bang, and there was a swirl of skirts again toward the staircase that scattered the guilty pair on the landing. The hostess heaved a patient sigh.

"They *shall* speak," said Mrs. Belmore when another hour had gone with the situation still unchanged. Her gentle voice had a note of determination. "I can't understand why he doesn't *make* her. She is literally crying her eyes out, because the whole day has been lost. Why didn't you send him into the parlour for a book, as I told you to, when I came up to take care of Dorothy?"

"He wouldn't go—he said he wasn't doing the kindergarten act any more. Hang it, I don't blame him. A man objects to being made a fool of before people, and he's tired of it. Here he goes off again to-morrow for two weeks, and she with no more heart than——"

"Where is he now?" asked Mrs. Belmore.

"Upstairs in my room, smoking."

" *Smoking !* I thought he'd promised her solemnly not to smoke."

" Yes, he did ; but he says he doesn't care a—red apple ; he's going to have some comfort out of the day. I've left him with a box of cigars ; good ones, too. He's having the time of his life."

" O—o—h ! " said Mrs. Belmore, with the rapt expression of one who sees beyond the veil. When she spoke it was with impressive slowness. " When you hear me come downstairs with Edith and go in the parlour, you wait a moment and then bring him down—*with his cigar*—into the library. Do you understand ? "

" No," said Mr. Belmore.

" Oh, Herbert ! If she sees him *smoking*— ! There's no time to lose, for I have to get tea to-night. When I call you, leave him and come at once, do you hear ? Don't stop a minute—just come, before they get a chance to follow."

" You bet I'll come," said Mr. Belmore, " like a bird to its—I will really, petty."

That he nearly knocked her down by his wildly tragic rush when she called from the back hall, " Herbert, please come at once ! I can't turn off the water," was a mere detail—they clung to each other in silent laughter, behind the enshrouding portières, not daring to move. The footfall of the deserted Edith was heard advancing from the front room to the library, and her clear and solemn voice, as of one actuated only by the lofty dictates of duty, penetrated distinctly to the listeners.

" Alan Wilson, is it possible that you are *smoking* ? Have you broken your promised word ? "

" Well, they're at it at last," said Mr. Belmore, relapsing into a chair in the kitchen with a sigh of relief, and drawing a folded newspaper from his pocket. " I wouldn't be in his shoes for a farm."

" Oh, it will be all right now," said Mrs. Belmore serenely. She added with some irrelevancy, " I've left the children to undress each other ; they've been *so* good. It's been such a different day, though, from what we had planned."

" It's too bad that you have to get the tea."

" Oh, I don't mind that a bit."

She had tucked up the silken skirt of her gown and was deftly measuring out coffee—after the swift, preliminary shaking of the fire with which every woman takes possession of a kitchen—pouring the water into the coffee-pot from the steaming kettle, and then vibrating between the kitchen closet and the butler's pantry with the quick,

capable movements of one who knows her ground thoroughly. "Really, it isn't any trouble. Margaret leaves half of the things ready, you know. If you'll just lift down that dish of salad for me—and the cold chicken is beside it. I hate to ask you to get up, but— Thank you. How good the coffee smells! I know you always like the coffee I make."

"You bet I do," said Mr. Belmore with fervour. "Say, petty, you don't think you could come out now and take a look at the garden? I'm almost sure the peas are beginning to show."

"No; I'm afraid there isn't time. We'll have to give it up for this Sunday." She paused for a great effort. "If you'd like to go by yourself, dear——"

"Wouldn't you mind?"

She paused again, looking at him with her clear-eyed seriousness.

"I don't think I mind now, but I might—afterward."

If he had hesitated, it was for a hardly appreciable second. "And I don't want to go," he protested stoutly; "it wouldn't be the same thing at all without you."

. . . . . .

"Everything is ready now," said his wife. "Though I do hate to disturb Edith and Alan. I'll just run up and hear the children say their prayers before I put those things on the table. If you would just take a look at the furnace"—it was the sentence Mr. Belmore had been dreading—"and then you can come up and kiss the children good-night."

Mr. Belmore, on his way up from stoking, caught a glimpse projected from the parlour mirror through an aperture in the doorway which the portières had left uncovered. The reflection was of a girl, with tear-stained face and closed eyes, her head upon a young man's shoulder, while his lips were touchingly pressed to her hair. The picture might have been called "After the Storm," the wreckage was so plainly apparent. As Mr. Belmore turned after ascending the flight of stairs he came full in sight of another picture, spread out to view in the room at the end of the hall. He stood unseen in the shadow regarding it.

His wife sat in a low chair near one of the two white beds; little Dorothy's crib was in their room beyond. The three children were perched on the foot of the nearest bed, white-gowned, with rosy faces and neatly brushed hair. While he looked, the youngest child gave

a birdlike flutter and jump, and lighted on the floor, falling on her knees, with her bowed head in the mother's lap, her hands upraised. As she finished the murmured prayer, helped by the tender mother voice, she rose and stood to one side, in infantine seriousness, while the next one spread her white plumes for the same flight, waiting afterward in reverent line with the first as the third hovered down.

It was plain to see from the mother's face that she had striven to put all earthly thoughts aside in the performance of this sacred office of ministering to innocence ; her eyes must be holy when her children's looked up at her on their way to God.

This was the little inner chapel, the Sanctuary of Home, where she was priestess by Divine right. It would have been an indifferent man, indeed, who had not fallen upon his knees in spirit, in company with this little household of faith, in mute recognition of the love and peace and order that crowned his days.

He kissed the laughing children as they clung to him, before she turned down the light. When she came out of the room he was waiting for her. He put his arm around her as he said, with the darling tenderness that made her life :

" Come along, old sweetness. We've got to go down and stir up those lunatics again. Call *that* ' the happiest time of your life ' ! *We* know better than that, don't we, petty ? I'll tell you what it is : I'll go to church with you next Sunday, if you say so ! "

ROBERT GRANT
B. 1852

AGAINST HIS JUDGMENT

THREE days had passed, and the excitement in the neighbourhood was nearly at an end. The apothecary's shop at the corner into which John Baker's body and the living four-year-old child had been carried together immediately after the catastrophe had lost most of its interest for the curious, although the noses of a few idlers were still pressed against the large pane in apparent search of something beyond the brilliant coloured bottles or the soda-water fountains. Now that the funeral was over, the womenkind whose windows commanded a view of the house where the dead man had been lying had taken their heads in and resumed their sweeping and washing, and knots of their husbands and fathers no longer stood in gaping conclave close to the very door-sill, rehearsing again and again the details of the distressing incident. Even the little child that had been so miraculously saved from the jaws of death, although still decked in the dirty finery which its mother deemed appropriate to its having suddenly become a public character, was beginning to fall into obscurity and to cease to be the recipient of the dimes of the tender-hearted. Curiously enough, such is the capriciousness of the human temperament at times of emotional excitement, the plan of a subscription for the victim's family had not been mooted until what was to its parents a small fortune had been bestowed on the rescued child; but the scale of justice had gradually righted itself, and contributions were now pouring in, especially since it was known that the mayor and several other well-known persons had headed the list with subscriptions of fifty dollars each; and there was reason to believe that a lump sum of from fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars would be collected for the benefit of the widow and seven children before the public generosity was exhausted.

Local interest was on the wane; but, thanks to the telegraph and the press, the facts were being disseminated through the country, and every leading newspaper in the land was chronicling, with more or less periphrasis according to the character of its patrons, the item that

John Baker, the gatekeeper at a railroad crossing in a Pennsylvania city, had snatched a toddling child from the pathway of a swiftly moving locomotive and been crushed to death.

A few days later a dinner company of eight was gathered at a country-house several hundred miles distant from the scene of the calamity. The host and hostess were people of wealth and leisure, who enjoyed inviting congenial parties from their social acquaintance in the neighbouring city to share with them for two or three days at a time the charms of nature. The dinner was appetizing and the wine good, and all present were engaged in that gracious unbending of self which ordinarily follows the action of refreshment and light on minds under the influence of pleasant impressions.

In a tavern the best result is joviality; at the dinner-table of intelligent gentlefolk—and of such we are speaking—the texture of the most agreeable conversation, though smooth as the choicest Laffitte and sparkling as champagne, has ever a thread of seriousness in the woof.

They had talked on a variety of topics: of the climate and landscape of Florida, where two of the party had sojourned during the winter months; of amateur photography, in which the hostess was proficient; of the very general use in common parlance of "don't" for "doesn't," and "but what" for "but that"; of Mrs. Langtry's beauty before she became an actress, concerning which one of the gentlemen who had met her in London was very eloquent; of some recent pictures and publications; of the impropriety and the increasing custom of feeing employees to do their duty; and of certain breaches of trust by bank officers and treasurers that, happening within a short time of one another, had startled the sensibilities of the community. This last subject begot a somewhat doleful train of commentary from two or three of the company, complaints of a too easy-going standard of morality, of a willingness not to be severe on anybody and to pass over lightly faults that our forefathers never would have condoned, of the decay of ideal considerations, and of the lack of enthusiasm for all but money-spinning among the rank and file of the people.

"The gist is here," reiterated in substance one of the speakers: "we insist upon tangible proof of everything, of being able to see and feel it—to get our dollar's worth, in short. We weigh and measure and scrutinize, and discard as fusty and outworn, conduct and guides to conduct that do not promise six per cent per annum in full sight."

"What have you to say to John Baker?" said mine host, breaking the pause that followed these remarks. "I take it for granted that you are all familiar with his story: the newspapers have been full of it. *There* was a man who did not step to measure or scrutinize."

A murmur of approbation followed, which was interrupted by Mrs. Caspar Green, a stout and rather languid lady, inquiring to whom he referred. "You know I never read the newspapers," she added, with a decidedly superior air, putting up her eyeglass.

"Except the deaths and marriages," exclaimed her husband, a lynx-eyed little stockbroker, who was perpetually poking what he called fun at his more ponderous half.

"Well, this was a death: so there was no excuse for her not seeing it," said Henry Lawford, the host. "No, seriously, Mrs. Green, it was a splendid instance of personal heroism: a gatekeeper at a railway crossing in Pennsylvania, perceiving a child of four on the track just in front of the fast express, rushed forward and managed to snatch up the little creature and deposit it on one side before—poor fellow!—he was struck and killed. There was no suggestion of counting upon six per cent there, was there?"

"Unless in another sphere," interjected Caspar Green.

"Don't be sacrilegious, Caspar," pleaded his wife, though she added her mite to the ripple of laughter that greeted the sally.

"It was superb!—superb!" exclaimed Miss Ann Newbury, a young woman not far from thirty, with a long neck and a high-bred, pale, intellectual face. "He is one of the men who make us proud of being men and women." She spoke with sententious earnestness and looked across the table appealingly at George Gorham.

"He left seven children, I believe?" said he, with precision.

"Yes, seven, Mr. Gorham—the eldest eleven," answered Mrs. Lawford, who was herself the mother of five. "Poor little things!"

"I think he made a great mistake," remarked George laconically.

For an instant there was a hiatus. The company was evidently making sure that it had understood his speech correctly. Then Miss Newbury gave a gasp, and Henry Lawford, with a certain stern dignity that he knew how to assume, said:

"A mistake? How so, pray?"

"In doing what he did—sacrificing his life to save the child."

"Why, Mr. Gorham?" exclaimed the hostess, while everybody turned toward him. He was a young man between thirty and thirty-

five, a lawyer beginning to be well thought of in his profession, with a thoughtful, pleasant expression and a vigorous physique.

"It seems to me," he continued slowly, seeking his words, "if John Baker had stopped to think, he would have acted differently. To be sure, he saved the life of an innocent child; but, on the other hand, he robbed of their sole means of support seven other no less innocent children and their mother. He was a brave man, I agree; but I, for one, should have admired him more if he had stopped to think."

"And let the child be killed?" exclaimed Mr. Carter, the gentleman who had deplored so earnestly the decay of ideal considerations. He was a young mill-treasurer, with aristocratic tendencies and a strong interest in church affairs.

"Yes, if needs be. It was in danger through no fault of his. Its natural guardians had neglected it."

"What a frightful view to take!" murmured Mrs. Green; and, although she was very well acquainted with George Gorham's physiognomy, she examined him disapprovingly through her glass, as if there must be something compromising about it that had hitherto escaped detection.

"Well, I don't agree with you at all," said the host emphatically.

"Nor I," said Mr. Carter.

"Nor I, Mr. Gorham," said Mrs. Lawford, so plaintively as to convey the impression that if a woman as ready as she to accept new points of view abandoned him there could be no chance of his being right.

"No, you're all wrong, my dear fellow," said Caspar Green. "Such ideas may go down among your long-haired artistic and literary friends at the Argonaut Club, but you can't expect civilized Christians to accept them. Why, man, it's monstrous—monstrous, by Jove!—to depreciate that noble fellow's action—a man that we all ought to be proud of, as Miss Newbury says. If we don't encourage such people, how can we expect them to be willing to risk their lives?" Thereupon the little broker, as a relief to his outraged feelings, emptied his champagne glass at a draught and scowled irascibly. His jesting equanimity was rarely disturbed; consequently, everybody felt the importance of his testimony.

"I'm sorry to be so completely in the minority," said Gorham, "but that's the way the matter strikes me. I don't think you quite

catch my point though, Caspar," he added, glancing at Mr. Green. At a less heated moment the company, with the possible exception of Mrs. Green, might have tacitly agreed that this was extremely probable; but now Miss Newbury, who had hitherto refrained from comment in order to digest the problem thoroughly before speaking, came to the broker's aid.

"It seems to me, Mr. Gorham," she said, "that your proposition is a very plain one: you claim simply that John Baker had better not have saved the child if in order to do so it was necessary to lose his own life."

"Precisely," exclaimed Mr. Green, in a tone of some contempt.

"Was not Mr. Gorham's meaning that, though it required very great courage to do what Baker did, a man who stopped to think of his own wife and children would have shown even greater courage in restraining his impulse to save the child?" asked Miss Emily Vincent. She was the youngest of the party, a beautiful girl, of fine presence, with a round face, dark eyes, and brilliant pink-and-white colouring. She had been invited to stay by the Lawfords because George Gorham was attentive to her; or, more properly speaking, George Gorham had been asked because he was attentive to her.

"Thank you, Miss Vincent: you have expressed my meaning perfectly," said Gorham; and his face gladdened. He was dead in love with her, and this was the first civil word, so to speak, that she had said to him during the visit.

"Do you agree with him?" inquired Miss Newbury, with intellectual sternness.

"And do you agree with Mr. Gorham?" asked Mrs. Lawford, at the same moment, caressingly.

All eyes were turned on Emily Vincent, and she let hers fall confusedly. She felt that she would have given worlds not to have spoken. Why had she spoken?

"I understand what he means; but I don't believe a man in John Baker's place could help himself," she said quietly.

"Of course he couldn't!" cried Mrs. Lawford. "There, Mr. Gorham, you have lost your champion. What have you to say now?" A murmur of approval went round the table.

"I appreciate my loss, but I fear I have nothing to add to what has been said already," he replied, with smiling firmness. "Although in a pitiful minority, I shall have to stand or fall by that."

"Ah, but when it came to action we know that under all circum-

stances Mr. Gorham would be his father's son," said Mrs. Lawford, with less than her usual tact, though she intended to be very ingratiating. Gorham's father had been killed in the Civil War, after having become conspicuous for gallantry.

Gorham bowed a little stiffly, feeling that there was nothing for him to say. There was a pause, evincing that the topic was getting threadbare, which prompted the host to anticipate Mr. Carter, who, having caught Miss Newbury's eye, was about to philosophize further on the same lines, by calling his wife's attention to the fact that one of the candles was flaring. This turned the current of conversation, and the subject was not alluded to again.

During the twelve months following his visit at the Lawfords' the attentions of George Gorham to Emily began to be noticeable. He had loved her for three years in secret; but the consciousness that he was not able to support a wife had hindered him from devoting himself pronouncedly to her. He knew that she, or rather her father, had considerable property; but Gorham was not willing to take this into consideration; he would never offer himself until his own income was sufficient for both their needs. But, on the other hand, his ideas of a sufficient income were not extravagant. He looked forward to building a comfortable little house in the suburbs in the midst of a few acres of garden and lawn, so that his neighbours' windows need not overlook his domesticity. He would have a horse and buggy wherewith to drive his wife through the country on summer afternoons, and later, if his bank-account warranted it, a saddle-horse for Emily and one for himself. He would keep open house in the sense of encouraging his friends to visit him; and, that they might like to come, he would have a thoroughly good plain cook—thereby eschewing French kickshaws—and his parlour and his own snuggery should afford the best new books, and on the walls etchings and sketches winsome to the eye, done by men who were rising rather than men who had risen. There should be no formality; his guests should do what they pleased and wear what they pleased, and, above all, they should become intimate with his wife, instead of merely tolerating her after the manner of the bachelor friends of so many other men.

Thus he had been in the habit of depicting to himself the future as he would have it be, and at last, by dint of strict undeviating attention to his business, he had got to the point where he could afford to realize his project if his lady-love were willing. His practice was increasing steadily, and he had laid by a few thousand dollars to meet

any unexpected emergency. His life was insured for fifty thousand dollars, and the policy was now ten years old. He had every reason to expect that in course of time as the older lawyers died off he would either succeed to the lucrative conduct of large suits or be made a judge of one of the higher tribunals. In this manner his ambition would be amply satisfied. His aim was to progress slowly but solidly, without splurge or notoriety, until every one came to regard him tacitly as a man of sound dispassionate judgment, keen understanding, and simple, earnest life. His especial antipathy was for so-called cranks, people who went off at half-cock, who thought nothing out, but were governed by the impulse of the moment, shilly-shally and controlled by unmasculine sentimentality.

It was with hope and yet with his heart in his mouth that he set out one afternoon determined to ask Emily Vincent to become his wife. She lived in the suburbs, within fifteen miles by the train, or an hour's walk from town. Gorham took the cars. It was a beautiful day, almost the counterpart of that which they had passed together at the Lawfords' just a year before. As he sat in the train he analysed the situation once more for the hundredth time, taking care not to give himself the advantage of any ambiguous symptoms. Certainly she was not indifferent to him ; she accepted his attentions without demur, and seemed interested in his interests. But was that love ? Was it any more than esteem or cordial liking that would turn to pity at the first hint of affection on his part ? But surely she could not plead ignorance of his intentions ; she must long ere this have realized that he was seriously attentive to her. Still, girls were strange creatures. He could not help feeling nervous, because so very much was involved for him in the result. Should she refuse him, he would be and remain for a long time excessively unhappy. He obliged himself to regard that alternative, and his heart sank before the possibility of its coming to pass. Not that the idea of dying or doing anything desperate presented itself to him. Such extravagance would have seemed out of keeping with respect either for her or for himself. Doubtless he might recover some day, but the interim would be terribly hard to endure. Rejection meant a dark, dreary bachelorhood ; success, the crowning of his dearest hopes.

He found his sweetheart at home, and she came down to greet him with roses that he had sent her in her bosom. It was not easy for him to do or say anything extravagant, and Emily Vincent, while she might have pardoned unseemly effusiveness to his exceeding love

for her, was well content with the deeply earnest though unriotous expression of his passion. When finally he had folded her in his arms she felt that the greatest happiness existence can give was hers, and he knew himself to be an utterly blissful lover. He had won the prize for which he had striven with a pertinacity like Jacob's, and life looked very roseate.

The news was broken to her family that evening, and received delightedly, though without the surprise the lovers had expected. They were left alone for a little while before the hour of parting, and in the sweet kisses given and taken Gorham redeemed himself in his mistress's estimation for any lack of folly he had been guilty of when he had asked her to be his wife. There was riot now in his eyes and in his embraces, revealing that he had needed only to be sure of her encouragement to become as ridiculous as she could desire. He stood disclosed to himself in a new light ; and when he had kissed her once more for the last time he went tripping down the lawn radiantly happy, turning now and again to throw back with his fingers a message from his lips to the one being in all the world for him who stood on the threshold, adding poetry and symmetry to the beautiful June evening.

When out of sight of the house, Gorham sped fleetly along the road. He intended to walk to town, for he felt like glorying in his happiness under the full moon which was shedding her silver light from a clear heaven. The air was not oppressive, and it was scented with the perfume of the lilacs and apple-blossoms, so that Gorham was fain every now and then to draw a deep breath in order to inhale their fragrance. There was no dust, and nature looked spruce and trig, without a taint of the frowziness that is observable in the foliage a month later.

Gorham took very little notice of the details ; his eyes were busy rather with mind-problems than with the particular beauties of the night ; yet his rapt gaze swept the brilliant heaven as though he felt its lustre to be in harmony with the radiance in his own soul. He was imagining the future—his hearth forever blessed by her sweet presence, their mutual joys and sorrows sweetened and alleviated through being shared, his efforts to live a life in accord with the highest intimations of his being, fortified by her example and counsel. How the pleasures of walking and riding and reading and travelling—of everything, in fact —would be a hundredfold enhanced by being able to interchange impressions with each other! He pictured to himself the cosy evenings they would pass at home beside the lamp when the day's work was done,

and the jolly trips they would take together when vacation time arrived. How he would watch over her, and how he would guard her and tend her and comfort her if misfortune came or ill-health assailed her! There would be little ones, perhaps, to claim their joint devotion and bid him redouble his energies; he smiled at the thought of baby fingers about his neck, and there arose to his mind's eyes a sweet vision of Emily sitting, pale but triumphant, rocking her new-born child upon her breast.

He walked swiftly on the wings of transport. It was almost as light as day, yet he met but few travellers along the country road. An occasional vehicle passed him, breaking the silvery stillness with its rumble that subsided at last into the distance. A pair of whispering lovers, arm in arm, who slunk into the shadow as he came abreast of them, won from him a glance of sympathy, and just after he had left them behind the shrill whistle of a locomotive jarring upon the silence seemed to bring him a message from the woman he adored. Had he not preferred to walk, that was the train he would have taken, and it must have stopped not many hundred yards from her door. He breathed a prayer of blessing on her rest, as he listened to it thundering past almost parallel to him in the cut below.

A little beyond this point the road curved and ran with gradual incline so as to cross the railroad track at grade about half a mile further on. This stretch of road was lined on each side by horse-chestnut trees set near to one another, the spreading foliage of which darkened the gravelled footpath, so that Gorham, who was enjoying the moonlight, preferred to keep in the middle of the road, which, by way of contrast, gleamed almost like a river. He was pursuing his way with elastic steps, when of a sudden his attention was arrested about a hundred and fifty yards from the crossing by something lying at the foot of one of the trees on the right-hand side. At a second glance he saw that it was a woman's figure. Probably she was asleep: but she might be ill or injured. It was a lonely spot: so it occurred to him that it was proper for him to ascertain which. Accordingly he stepped to her side and bent over her. From her calico dress, which was her only covering, she evidently belonged to the labouring class. She was a large, coarse-looking woman, and was lying, in what appeared to Gorham to be drunken slumber, on her bonnet, the draggled strings of which protruded. He hesitated a moment, and then shook her by the arm. She groaned boozily, but after he had shaken her again two or three times she rolled over and raised herself on her elbow, rubbing

her eyes and staring at him glassily. " Are you hurt, woman ? " he asked.

She made a guttural response which might have meant anything, but she proved that she was uninjured by getting on her feet. She stared at her disturber bewilderedly, then, perceiving her bonnet, stooped to pick it up, and stood for a moment trying sleepily to poke it into shape and readjust its tawdry plumage. But all of a sudden she gave a start and began looking around her with recovered energy. She missed something, evidently. Gorham followed the direction of her gaze as it shifted, and as his glance met the line of the road he perceived a little figure standing in the middle of the railway crossing. It was a child—her child, without doubt—and as he said so to himself the roar of an approaching train, coupled with the sound of the whistle, made him start with horror. The late express from town was due. Gorham remembered that there was a considerable curve in the railroad at this point. The woman had not perceived the situation—she was too far in the shade—but Gorham from where he stood commanded a clear view of the track.

Without an instant's hesitation, he sprang forward and ran at full speed. His first thought was that the train was very near. He ran with all his might and main, his eyes fixed on the little white figure and shouting to warn it of its danger. Suddenly there flashed before his mind with vividness the remembrance of John Baker, and he recalled his argument at the Lawfords'. But he did not abate his speed. The child had plumped itself down on one of the sleepers, and was apparently playing with some pebbles. It was on the further track, and, startled by his cries and by the clang of the approaching train, looked up at him. He saw a pale, besmeared little countenance ; he heard behind him the agonizing screams of the mother, who had realized her baby's peril ; in his ears rang the shrill warning of the engineer as the engine rounded the curve. Would he be in time ?

As he reached the edge of the tracks, thought of Emily and a terrible consciousness of the sorrow she would feel if anything were to happen to him compressed his heart. But he did not falter. He was aware of the jangle of a fiercely rung bell, the hiss of steam, and a blinding glare ; he could feel on his cheek the breath of the iron monster. With set teeth he threw himself forward, stooped, and reached out over the rail : in another instant he had tossed the child from the pathway of danger, and he himself had been mangled to death by the powerful engine.

THOMAS NELSON PAGE
B. 1853

OLE 'STRACTED

"AWE, little Ephum! *awe*, little E-phum! ef you don' come 'long heah, boy, an' rock dis chile, I'll buss you haid open!" screamed the high-pitched voice of a woman, breaking the stillness of the summer evening. She had just come to the door of the little cabin, where she was now standing, anxiously scanning the space before her, while a baby's plaintive wail rose and fell within with wearying monotony. The log cabin, set in a gall in the middle of an old field all grown up in sassafras, was not a very inviting-looking place; a few hens loitering about the new hen-house, a brood of half-grown chickens picking in the grass and watching the door, and a runty pig tied to a "stob," were the only signs of thrift; yet the face of the woman cleared up as she gazed about her and afar off, where the gleam of green made a pleasant spot, where the corn grew in the river bottom; for it was her home, and the best of all was she thought it belonged to them.

A rumble of distant thunder caught her ear, and she stepped down and took a well-worn garment from the clothes-line, stretched between two dogwood forks, and having, after a keen glance down the path through the bushes, satisfied herself that no one was in sight, she returned to the house, and the baby's voice rose louder than before. The mother, as she set out her ironing table, raised a dirge-like hymn, which she chanted, partly from habit and partly in self-defence. She ironed carefully the ragged shirt she had just taken from the line, and then, after some search, finding a needle and cotton, she drew a chair to the door and proceeded to mend the garment.

"Dis de on'ies' shut Ole 'Stracted got," she said, as if in apology to herself for being so careful.

The cloud slowly gathered over the pines in the direction of the path; the fowls carefully tripped up the path, and after a prudent pause at the hole, disappeared one by one within; the chickens picked in a gradually contracting circuit, and finally one or two stole furtively to the cabin door, and after a brief reconnaissance came in, and fluttered

up the ladder to the loft, where they had been born, and yet roosted. Once more the baby's voice prevailed, and once more the woman went to the door, and, looking down the path, screamed, " Awe, little Ephum ! awe, little Ephum ! "

" Ma'm," came the not very distant answer from the bushes.

" Why 'n't you come 'long heah, boy, an' rock dis chile ? "

" Yes'm, I comin'," came the answer. She waited, watching, until there emerged from the bushes a queer little caravan, headed by a small brat, who staggered under the weight of another apparently nearly as large and quite as black as himself, while several more of various degrees of diminutiveness struggled along behind.

" Ain't you heah me callin' you, boy ? You better come when I call you. I'll tyah you all to pieces ! " pursued the woman, in the angriest of keys, her countenance, however, appearing unruffled. The head of the caravan stooped and deposited his burden carefully on the ground ; then, with a comical look of mingled alarm and penitence, he slowly approached the door, keeping his eye watchfully on his mother, and, picking his opportunity, slipped in past her, dodging skilfully just enough to escape a blow which she aimed at him, and which would have " slapped him flat " had it struck him, but which, in truth, was intended merely to warn and keep him in wholesome fear, and was purposely aimed high enough to miss him, allowing for the certain dodge.

The culprit, having stifled the whimper with which he was prepared, flung himself on to the foot of the rough plank cradle, and began to rock it violently and noisily, using one leg as a lever, and singing an accompaniment, of which the only words that rose above the noise of the rockers were " By-a-by, don't you cry ; go to sleep, little baby " ; and sure enough the baby stopped crying and went to sleep.

Eph watched his mammy furtively as she scraped away the ashes and laid the thick pone of dough on the hearth, and shovelled the hot ashes upon it. Supper would be ready directly, and it was time to propitiate her. He bethought himself of a message.

" Mammy, Ole 'Stracted say you must bring he shut ; he say he marster comin' to-night."

" How he say he is ? " inquired the woman, with some interest.

" He ain' say—jes say he want he shut. He sutny is comical—he layin' down in de baid." Then, having relieved his mind, Eph went to sleep in the cradle.

" ' Layin' down in de baid ? ' " quoted the woman to herself as she moved about the room. " I 'ain' nuver hern 'bout dat befo'. Dat sutny is a comical ole man anyways. He say he used to live on dis plantation, an' yit he al'ays talkin' 'bout de gret house an' de fine kerridges dee used to have, an' 'bout he marster comin' to buy him back. De 'ain' nuver been no gret house on dis place, not sense I know nuttin 'bout it, 'sep de overseer house whar dat man live. I heah Ephum say Aunt Dinah tell him de ole house whar used to be on de hill whar dat gret oak-tree is in de pines bu'nt down de year he wuz born, an' he ole marster had to live in de overseer house, an' hit break he heart, an' dee teck all he niggers, an' dat's de way *he* come to blongst to we all ; but dat ole man ain' know nuttin 'bout dat house, 'cause hit bu'nt down. I wonder whar he did come from ? " she pursued, " an' what he sho' 'nough name ? He sholy couldn' been named ' Ole 'Stracted,' jes so ; dat ain' no name 'tall. Yit ef he ain' 'stracted, 'tain' nobody is. He ain' even know he own name," she continued presently. " Say he marster'll know him when he come—ain' know de folks is free ; say he marster gwi buy him back in de summer an' kyar him home, an' 'bout de money he gwine gi' him. Ef he got any money, I wonder he live down dyah in dat evil-sperit hole." And the woman glanced around with great complacency on the picture-pasted walls of her own by no means sumptuously furnished house. " Money ! " she repeated aloud, as she began to rake in the ashes, " He ain' got nuttin. I got to kyar him piece o' dis bread now," and she went off into a dream of what they would do when the big crop on their land should be all in, and the last payment made on the house ; of what she would wear, and how she would dress the children, and the appearance she would make at meeting, not reflecting that the sum they had paid for the property had never, even with all their stinting, amounted in any one year to more than a few dollars over the rent charged for the place, and that the eight hundred dollars yet due on it was more than they could make at the present rate in a lifetime.

" Ef Ephum jes had a mule, or even somebody to help him," she thought, " but he ain' got nuttin. De chil'n ain big 'nough to do nuttin but eat ; he 'ain' not no brurrs, an' he deddy took 'way an' sold down Souf de same time my ole marster whar dead buy him ; dat's what I al'ays heah 'em say, an' I know he's dead long befo' dis, 'cause I heah 'em say dese Virginia niggers carn stan' hit long deah, hit so hot, hit frizzle 'em up, an' I reckon he die befo' he ole marster, whar

I heah say die of a broked heart torectly after dee teck he niggers an' sell 'em befo' he face. I heah Aunt Dinah say dat, an' dat he might'ly sot on he ole servants, spressaly on Ephum deddy, whar named Little Ephum, an' whar used to wait on him. Dis mus' 'a' been a gret place dem days, 'cordin' to what dee say." She went on: "Dee say he sutny live strong, wuz jes rich as cream, an' weahed he blue coat an' brass buttons, an' lived in dat ole house whar was up whar de pines is now, an' whar bu'nt down, like he owned de wull. An' now look at it; dat man own it all, an' cuttin' all de woods off it. He don't know nuttin 'bout black folks, ain' nuver been fotch up wid 'em. Who ever heah he name 'fo' he come heah an' buy de place, an' move in de overseer house, an' charge we all eight hundred dollars for dis land, jes 'cause it got little piece o' bottom on it, an' forty-eight dollars rent besides, wid he ole stingy wife whar oon' even gi' 'way buttermilk!" An expression of mingled disgust and contempt concluded the reflection.

She took the ash-cake out of the ashes, slapped it first on one side, then on the other, with her hand, dusted it with her apron, and walked to the door and poured a gourd of water from the piggin over it. Then she divided it in half; one half she set up against the side of the chimney, the other she broke up into smaller pieces and distributed among the children, dragging the sleeping Eph, limp and soaked with sleep, from the cradle to receive his share. Her manner was not rough—was perhaps even tender—but she used no caresses, as a white woman would have done under the circumstances. It was only toward the baby at the breast that she exhibited any endearments. Her nearest approach to it with the others was when she told them, as she portioned out the ash-cake, "Mammy ain't got nuttin else; but nuver min', she gwine have plenty o' good meat next year, when deddy done pay for he land."

"Hi! who dat out dyah?" she said suddenly. "Run to de do', son, an' see who dat comin'," and the whole tribe rushed to inspect the new-comer.

It was, as she suspected, her husband, and as soon as he entered she saw that something was wrong. He dropped into a chair, and sat in moody silence, the picture of fatigue, physical and mental. After waiting for some time, she asked indifferently, "What de matter?"

"Dat man."

"What he done do now?" The query was sharp with suspicion.

"He say he ain' gwine let me have my land."

"He's a half-strainer," said the woman, with sudden anger. "How he gwine help it? Ain' you got crap on it?" She felt that there must be a defence against such an outrage.

"He say he ain' gwine wait no longer; dat I wuz to have tell Christmas to finish payin' for it, an' I ain' do it, an' now he done change he min'."

"Tell dis Christmas comin'," said his wife, with the positiveness of one accustomed to expound contracts.

"Yes; but I tell you he say he done change he min'." The man had evidently given up all hope; he was dead beat.

"De crap's yourn," said she, affected by his surrender, but prepared only to compromise.

"He say he gwine teck all dat for de rent, and dat he gwine drive Ole 'Stracted 'way too."

"He ain' nuttin but po' white trash!" It expressed her supreme contempt.

"He say he'll gi' me jes one week mo' to pay him all he ax for it," continued he, forced to a correction by her intense feeling, and the instinct of a man to defend the absent from a woman's attack, and perhaps in the hope that she might suggest some escape.

"He ain' nuttin sep po' white trash!" she repeated. "How you gwine raise eight hundred dollars at once? Dee kyarn nobody do dat. Gord mout! He ain' got good sense."

"You ain' see dat corn lately, is you?" he asked. "Hit jes as rank! You can almos' see it growin' ef you look at it good. Dat's strong land. I know dat when I buy it."

He knew it was gone now, but he had been in the habit of calling it his in the past three years, and it did him good to claim the ownership a little longer.

"I wonder whar Marse Johnny is?" said the woman. He was the son of her former owner; and now, finding her proper support failing her, she instinctively turned to him. "He wouldn' let him turn we all out."

"He ain' got nuttin, an' ef he is, he kyarn get it in a week," said Ephraim.

"Kyarn you teck it in de co't?"

"Dat's whar he say he gwine have it ef I don' git out," said her husband despairingly.

Her last defence was gone.

" Ain' you hongry ? " she inquired.

" What you got ? "

" I jes gwine kill a chicken for you."

It was her nearest approach to tenderness, and he knew it was a mark of special attention, for all the chickens and eggs had for the past three years gone to swell the fund which was to buy the home, and it was only on special occasions that one was spared for food.

The news that he was to be turned out of his home had fallen on him like a blow, and had stunned him ; he could make no resistance, he could form no plans. He went into a rough estimate as he waited.

" Le' me see : I done wuck for it three years dis Christmas done gone ; how much does dat meck ? "

" An' fo' dollars, an' five dollars, an' two dollars an' a half last Christmas from de chickens, an' all dem ducks I done sell he wife, an' de washin' I been doin' for 'em ; how much is dat ? " supplemented his wife.

" Dat's what I say ! "

His wife endeavoured vainly to remember the amount she had been told it was ; but the unaccounted-for washing changed the sum and destroyed her reliance on the result. And as the chicken was now approaching perfection, and required her undivided attention, she gave up the arithmetic and applied herself to her culinary duties.

Ephraim also abandoned the attempt, and waited in a reverie, in which he saw corn stand so high and rank over his land that he could scarcely distinguish the bulk, and a stable and barn and a mule, or maybe two—it was a possibility—and two cows which his wife would milk, and a green wagon driven by his boys, while he took it easy and gave orders like a master, and a clover patch, and wheat, and he saw the yellow grain waving, and heard his sons sing the old harvest song of " Cool Water " while they swung their cradles, and—

" You say he gwine turn Ole 'Stracted out, too ? " inquired his wife, breaking the spell. The chicken was done now, and her mind reverted to the all-engrossing subject.

" Yes ; say he tired o' ole 'stracted nigger livin' on he place an' payin' no rent."

" Good Gord A'mighty ! Pay rent for dat ole pile o' logs ! Ain' he been mendin' he shoes an' harness for rent all dese years ? "

" 'Twill kill dat ole man to tu'n him out dat house," said Ephraim ; " he ain' 'nuver stay away from dyah a hour since he come heah."

" Sutny 'twill," assented his wife; then she added, in reply to the rest of the remark, " Nuver min'; den we'll see what he got in dyah." To a woman, that was at least some compensation. Ephraim's thoughts had taken a new direction.

" He al'ays feared he marster'd come for him while he 'way," he said, in mere continuance of his last remark.

" He sen' me wud he marster comin' to-night, an' he want he shut," said his wife, as she handed him his supper. Ephraim's face expressed more than interest; it was tenderness which softened the rugged lines as he sat looking into the fire. Perhaps he thought of the old man's loneliness, and of his own father torn away and sold so long ago, before he could even remember, and perhaps very dimly of the beauty of the sublime devotion of this poor old creature to his love and his trust, holding steadfast beyond memory, beyond reason, after the knowledge even of his own identity and of his very name was lost.

The woman caught the contagion of his sympathy.

" De chil'n say he mighty comical, an' he layin' down in de baid," she said.

Ephraim rose from his seat.

" Whar you gwine ? "

" I mus' go to see 'bout him," he said simply.

" Ain' you gwine finish eatin' ? "

" I gwine kyar dis to him."

" Well, I kin cook you anurr when we come back," said his wife, with ready acquiescence.

In a few minutes they were on the way, going single file down the path through the sassafras, along which little Eph and his followers had come an hour before, the man in the lead and his wife following, and, according to the custom of their race, carrying the bundles, one the surrendered supper and the other the neatly folded and well-patched shirt in which Ole 'Stracted hoped to meet his long-expected loved ones.

As they came in sight of the ruinous little hut which had been the old man's abode since his sudden appearance in the neighbourhood a few years after the war, they observed that the bench beside the door was deserted, and that the door stood ajar—two circumstances which neither of them remembered ever to have seen before; for in all the years in which he had been their neighbour Ole 'Stracted had

never admitted any one within his door, and had never been known to leave it open. In mild weather he occupied a bench outside, where he either cobbled shoes for his neighbours, accepting without question anything they paid him, or else sat perfectly quiet, with the air of a person waiting for some one. He held only the briefest communication with anybody, and was believed by some to have intimate relations with the Evil One, and his tumble-down hut, which he was particular to keep closely daubed, was thought by such as took this view of the matter to be the temple where he practised his unholy rites. For this reason, and because the little cabin, surrounded by dense pines and covered with vines which the popular belief held " pizenous," was the most desolate abode a human being could have selected, most of the dwellers in that section gave the place a wide berth, especially toward nightfall, and Ole 'Stracted would probably have suffered but for the charity of Ephraim and his wife, who, although often wanting the necessaries of life themselves, had long divided it with their strange neighbour. Yet even they had never been admitted inside his door, and knew no more of him than the other people about the settlement knew.

His advent in the neighbourhood had been mysterious. The first that was known of him was one summer morning, when he was found sitting on the bench beside the door of this cabin, which had long been unoccupied and left to decay. He was unable to give any account of himself, except that he always declared that he had been sold by some one other than his master from that plantation, that his wife and boy had been sold to some other person at the same time for twelve hundred dollars (he was particular as to the amount), and that his master was coming in the summer to buy him back and take him home, and would bring him his wife and child when he came. Everything since that day was a blank to him, and as he could not tell the name of his master or wife, or even his own name, and as no one was left old enough to remember him, the neighbourhood having been entirely deserted after the war, he simply passed as a harmless old lunatic labouring under a delusion. He was devoted to children, and Ephraim's small brood were his chief delight. They were not at all afraid of him, and whenever they got a chance they would slip off and steal down to his house, where they might be found any time squatting about his feet, listening to his accounts of his expected visit from his master, and what he was going to do afterward.

It was all of a great plantation, and fine carriages and horses, and a house with his wife and the boy.

This was all that was known of him, except that once a stranger, passing through the country, and hearing the name Ole 'Stracted, said that he heard a similar one once, long before the war, in one of the Louisiana parishes, where the man roamed at will, having been bought of the trader by the gentleman who owned him, for a small price, on account of his infirmity. "Is you gwine in dyah?" asked the woman, as they approached the hut.

"Hi! yes; 'tain' nuttin' gwine hu't you; an' you say Ephum say he be layin' in de baid?" he replied, his mind having evidently been busy on the subject.

"An' mighty comical," she corrected him, with exactness born of apprehension.

"Well? I 'feared he sick."

"I ain' nuver been in dyah," she persisted.

"Ain' de chil'n been in dyah?"

"Dee say 'stracted folks oon hu't chil'n."

"Dat ole man oon hu't nobody; he jes tame as a ole tomcat."

"I wonder he ain' feared to live in dat lonesome ole house by hisself. I jes lieve stay in a graveyard at once. I ain' wonder folks say he sees sperrits in dat hanty-lookin' place." She came up by her husband's side at the suggestion. "I wonder he don' go home."

"Whar he got any home to go to sep heaven?" said Ephraim.

"What was you mammy name, Ephum?"

"Mymy," said he, simply.

They were at the cabin now, and a brief pause of doubt ensued. It was perfectly dark inside the door, and there was not a sound. The bench where they had heretofore held their only communication with their strange neighbour was lying on its side in the weeds which grew up to the very walls of the ruinous cabin, and a lizard suddenly ran over it, and with a little rustle disappeared under the rotting ground-sill. To the woman it was an ill omen. She glanced furtively behind her, and moved nearer her husband's side. She noticed that the cloud above the pines was getting a faint yellow tinge on its lower border, while it was very black above them. It filled her with dread, and she was about to call her husband's notice to it, when a voice within arrested their attention. It was very low, and they both listened in awed silence, watching the door meanwhile as if they expected to see something supernatural spring from it.

" Nem min'—jes wait—'tain so long now—he'll be heah torectly," said the voice. " Dat's what he say—gwine come an' buy me back —den we gwine home."

In their endeavour to catch the words they moved nearer, and made a slight noise. Suddenly the low, earnest tone changed to one full of eagerness. " Who dat ? " was called in sharp inquiry.

" 'Tain' nobody but me an' Polly, Ole 'Stracted," said Ephraim, pushing the door slightly wider open and stepping in. They had an indistinct idea that the poor deluded creature had fancied them his longed-for loved ones, yet it was a relief to see him bodily.

" Who you say you is ? " inquired the old man feebly.

" Me an' Polly."

" I done bring you shut home," said the woman, as if supplementing her husband's reply. " Hit all bran' clean, an' I done patch it."

" Oh, I thought——" said the voice sadly.

They knew what he thought. Their eyes were now accustomed to the darkness, and they saw that the only article of furniture which the room contained was the wretched bed or bench on which the old man was stretched. The light sifting through the chinks in the roof enabled them to see his face, and that it had changed much in the last twenty-four hours, and an instinct told them that he was near the end of his long waiting.

" How is you, Ole 'Stracted ? " asked the woman.

" Dat ain' my name," answered the old man promptly. It was the first time he had ever disowned the name.

" Well, how is you, Ole—— What I gwine to call you ? " asked she, with feeble finesse.

" I don' know—he kin tell you."

" Who ? "

" Who ? Marster. He know it. Ole 'Stracted ain' know it ; but dat ain' nuttin. *He* know it—got it set down in de book. I jes waitin' for 'em now."

A hush fell on the little audience—they were in full sympathy with him, and, knowing no way of expressing it, kept silence. Only the breathing of the old man was audible in the room. He was evidently nearing the end. " I mighty tired of waitin'," he said pathetically. " Look out dyah and see ef you see anybody," he added suddenly.

Both of them obeyed, and then returned and stood silent ; they could not tell him no.

Presently the woman said, " Don' you warn put you' shut on ? "

" What did you say my name was ? " he said.

" Ole 'Str——" She paused at the look of pain on his face, shifted uneasily from one foot to the other, and relapsed into embarrassed silence.

" Nem min' ! dee'll know it—dee'll know me 'dout any name, oon dee ? " He appealed wistfully to them both. The woman for answer unfolded the shirt. He moved feebly, as if in assent.

" I so tired waitin'," he whispered ; " done 'mos gin out, an' he oon come ; but I thought I heah little Eph to-day ? " There was a faint inquiry in his voice.

" Yes, he wuz heah."

" Wuz he ? " The languid form became instantly alert, the tired face took on a look of eager expectancy. " Heah, gi' m'y shut quick. I knowed it. Wait ; go over dyah, son, and git me dat money. He'll be heah torectly." They thought his mind wandered, and merely followed the direction of his eyes with theirs. " Go over dyah quick —don't you heah me ? "

And to humour him Ephraim went over to the corner indicated.

" Retch up dyah, an' run you' hand in onder de second jice. It's all in dyah," he said to the woman—" twelve hunderd dollars—dat's what dee went for. I wucked night an' day forty year to save dat money for marster ; you know dee teck all he land an' all he niggers an' tu'n him out in de old fiel' ? I put 'tin dyah 'ginst he come. You ain' know he comin' dis evenin', is you ? Heah, help me on wid dat shut, gal—I stan'in' heah talkin' an' maybe ole marster waitin'. Push de do' open so you kin see. Forty year ago," he murmured, as Polly jammed the door back and returned to his side—" forty year ago dee come an' leveled on me : marster sutny did cry. ' Nem min',' he said, ' I comin' right down in de summer to buy you back an' bring you home.' He's comin', too—nuver tol' me a lie in he life—comin' dis evenin'. Make 'aste." This in tremulous eagerness to the woman, who had involuntarily caught the feeling, and was now with eager and ineffectual haste trying to button his shirt.

An exclamation from her husband caused her to turn around, as he stepped into the light and held up an old sock filled with something.

" Heah, hol you' apron," said the old man to Polly, who gathered up the lower corners of her apron and stood nearer the bed.

" Po' it in dyah." This to Ephraim, who mechanically obeyed. He pulled off the string, and poured into his wife's lap the heap of glittering coin—gold and silver more than their eyes had ever seen before.

" Hit's all dyah," said the old man confidentially, as if he were rendering an account. " I been savin' it ever sence dee took me 'way. I so busy savin' it I ain' had time to eat, but I ain' hongry now ; have plenty when I git home." He sank back exhausted. " Oon marster be glad to see me ? " he asked presently in pathetic simplicity. " You know we grewed up togerr ? I been waitin' so long I 'feared dee 'mos' done forgit me. You reckon dee is ? " he asked the woman appealingly.

" No, suh, dee ain' forgit you," she said comfortingly.

" I know dee ain'," he said, reassured. " Dat's what he tell me —he ain' nuver gwine forgit me." The reaction had set in, and his voice was so feeble now it was scarcely audible. He was talking rather to himself than to them, and finally he sank into a doze. A painful silence reigned in the little hut, in which the only sign was the breathing of the dying man. A single shaft of light stole down under the edge of the slowly passing cloud and slipped up to the door. Suddenly the sleeper waked with a start, and gazed around.

" Hit gittin' mighty dark," he whispered faintly. " You reckon dee'll git heah 'fo' dark ? "

The light was dying from his eyes.

" Ephum," said the woman, softly, to her husband.

The effect was electrical.

" Heish ! you heah dat ! " exclaimed the dying man eagerly.

" Ephum "—she repeated. The rest was drowned by Ole 'Stracted's joyous exclamation.

" Gord ! I knowed it ! " he cried, suddenly rising upright, and, with beaming face, stretching both arms toward the door. " Dyah dee come ! Now watch 'em smile. All y'all jes stand back. Heah de one you lookin' for. Marster—Mymy—heah's Little Ephum ! " And with a smile on his face he sank back into his son's arms.

The evening sun, dropping on the instant to his setting, flooded the room with light ; but as Ephraim gently eased him down and drew his arm from around him, it was the light of the unending morning that was on his face. His Master had at last come for him, and after his long waiting, Ole 'Stracted had indeed gone home.

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER
1855–1896

THE NICE PEOPLE

"THEY certainly are nice people," I assented to my wife's observation, using the colloquial phrase with a consciousness that it was anything but "nice" English, "and I'll bet that their three children are better brought up than most of——"

"*Two* children," corrected my wife.

"Three, he told me."

"My dear, she said there were *two*."

"He said three."

"You've simply forgotten. I'm *sure* she told me they had only two—a boy and a girl."

"Well, I didn't enter into particulars."

"No, dear, and you couldn't have understood him. Two children."

"All right," I said; but I did not think it was all right. As a near-sighted man learns by enforced observation to recognise persons at a distance when the face is not visible to the normal eye, so the man with a bad memory learns, almost unconsciously, to listen carefully and report accurately. My memory is bad; but I had not had time to forget that Mr. Brewster Brede had told me that afternoon that he had three children, at present left in the care of his mother-in-law, while he and Mrs. Brede took their summer vacation.

"Two children," repeated my wife; "and they are staying with his aunt Jenny."

"He told me with his mother-in-law," I put in. My wife looked at me with a serious expression. Men may not remember much of what they are told about children; but any man knows the difference between an aunt and a mother-in-law.

"But don't you think they're nice people?" asked my wife.

"Oh, certainly," I replied; "only they seem to be a little mixed up about their children."

"That isn't a nice thing to say," returned my wife.

I could not deny it.

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And yet the next morning, when the Bredes came down and seated themselves opposite us at table, beaming and smiling in their natural, pleasant, well-bred fashion, I knew, to a social certainty, that they *were* "nice" people. He was a fine-looking fellow in his neat tennis-flannels, slim, graceful, twenty-eight or thirty years old, with a Frenchy-pointed beard. She was "nice" in all her pretty clothes, and she herself was pretty with that type of prettiness which outwears most other types—the prettiness that lies in a rounded figure, a dusky skin, plump, rosy cheeks, white teeth, and black eyes. She might have been twenty-five; you guessed that she was prettier than she was at twenty, and that she would be prettier still at forty.

And nice people were all we wanted to make us happy in Mr. Jacobus's summer boarding-house on the top of Orange Mountain. For a week we had come down to breakfast each morning, wondering why we wasted the precious days of idleness with the company gathered around the Jacobus board. What joy of human companionship was to be had out of Mrs. Tabb and Miss Hoogencamp, the two middle-aged gossips from Scranton, Pa.—out of Mr. and Mrs. Biggle, an indurated head-bookkeeper and his prim and censorious wife—out of old Major Halkit, a retired business man, who, having once sold a few shares on commission, wrote for circulars of every stock company that was started, and tried to induce every one to invest who would listen to him? We looked around at those dull faces, the truthful indices of mean and barren minds, and decided that we would leave that morning. Then we ate Mrs. Jacobus's biscuits, light as Aurora's cloudlets, drank her honest coffee, inhaled the perfume of the late azaleas with which she decked her table, and decided to postpone our departure one more day. And then we wandered out to take our morning glance at what we called "our view"; and it seemed to us as if Tabb and Hoogencamp, and Halkit and the Biggles could not drive us away in a year.

I was not surprised when, after breakfast, my wife invited the Bredes to walk with us to "our view." The Hoogencamp-Biggle-Tabb-Halkit contingent never stirred off Jacobus's verandah; but we both felt that the Bredes would not profane that sacred scene. We strolled slowly across the fields, passed through the little belt of wood, and as I heard Mrs. Brede's little cry of startled rapture, I motioned to Brede to look up.

"By Jove!" he cried; "heavenly!"

We looked off from the brow of the mountain over fifteen miles of billowing green, to where, far across a far stretch of pale blue, lay a dim purple line that we knew was Staten Island. Towns and villages lay before us and under us; there were ridges and hills, uplands and lowlands, woods and plains, all massed and mingled in that great silent sea of sunlit green. For silent it was to us, standing in the silence of a high place—silent with a Sunday stillness that made us listen, without taking thought, for the sound of bells coming up from the spires that rose above the tree-tops—the tree-tops that lay as far beneath us as the light clouds were above us that dropped great shadows upon our heads and faint specks of shade upon the broad sweep of land at the mountain's foot.

"And so that is *your* view?" asked Mrs. Brede, after a moment; "you are very generous to make it ours too."

Then we lay down on the grass, and Brede began to talk in a gentle voice, as if he felt the influence of the place. He had paddled a canoe, in his earlier days, he said, and he knew every river and creek in that vast stretch of landscape. He found his landmarks, and pointed out to us where the Passaic and the Hackensack flowed, invisible to us, hidden behind great ridges that in our sight were but combings of the green waves upon which we looked down, and yet on the further side of those broad ridges and rises were scores of villages —a little world of country life, lying unseen under our eyes.

"A good deal like looking at humanity," he said; "there is such a thing as getting so far above our fellow-men that we see only one side of them."

Ah, how much better was this sort of talk than the chatter and gossip of the Tabb and the Hoogencamp—than the Major's dissertations upon his everlasting circulars! My wife and I exchanged glances.

"Now, when I went up the Matterhorn——" Mr. Brede began.

"Why, dear," interrupted his wife; "I didn't know you ever went up the Matterhorn."

"It—it was five years ago," said Mr. Brede hurriedly; "I—I didn't tell you—when I was on the other side, you know—it was rather dangerous—well, as I was saying—it looked—oh, it didn't look at all like this."

A cloud floated overhead, throwing its great shadow over the field where we lay. The shadow passed over the mountain's brow, and reappeared far below, a rapidly decreasing blot; flying east-

ward over the golden green. My wife and I exchanged glances once more. Somehow the shadow lingered over us all. As we went home, the Bredes went side by side along the narrow path, and my wife and I walked together.

"*Should you think*," she asked me, "that a man would climb the Matterhorn the very first year he was married?"

"I don't know, my dear," I answered evasively; "this isn't the first year I have been married, not by a good many, and I wouldn't climb it—for a farm."

"You know what I mean?" she said. I did.

. . . . . .

When we reached the boarding-house, Mr. Jacobus took me aside.

"You know," he began his discourse, "my wife, she used to live in N' York!"

I didn't know; but I said, "Yes."

"She says the numbers on the streets runs criss-cross like. Thirty-four's on one side o' the street, an' thirty-five's on t'other. How's that?"

"That is the invariable rule, I believe."

"Then—I say—these here new folk that you 'n' your wife seems so mighty taken up with—d'ye know anything about 'em?"

"I know nothing about the character of your boarders, Mr. Jacobus," I replied, conscious of some irritability. "If I choose to associate with any of them——"

"Jess so—jess so!" broke in Jacobus. "I hain't nothin' to say ag'inst yer sosherbil'ty. But do ye *know* them?"

"Why, certainly not," I replied.

"Well—that was all I wuz askin' ye. Ye see, when *he* come here to take the rooms—you wasn't here then—he told my wife that he lived at number thirty-four in his street. An' yistiddy *she* told her that they lived at number thirty-five. He said he lived in an apartment-house. Now, there can't be no apartment-house on two sides of the same street, kin they?"

"What street was it?" I inquired wearily.

"Hundred 'n' twenty-first street."

"Maybe," I replied, still more wearily. "That's Harlem. Nobody knows what people will do in Harlem."

I went up to my wife's room.

"Don't you think it queer?" she asked me.

"I think I'll have a talk with that young man to-night," I said, "and see if he can give some account of himself."

"But, my dear," my wife said gravely, "*she* doesn't know whether they've had the measles or not."

"Why, Great Scott!" I exclaimed, "they must have had them when they were children."

"Please don't be stupid," said my wife. "I meant *their* children."

. . . . . .

After dinner that night—or rather after supper, for we had dinner in the middle of the day at Jacobus's—I walked down the long verandah to ask Brede, who was placidly smoking at the other end, to accompany me on a twilight stroll. Half-way down I met Major Halkit.

"That friend of yours," he said, indicating the unconscious figure at the further end of the house, "seems to be a queer sort of a Dick. He told me that he was out of business, and just looking round for a chance to invest his capital. And I've been telling him what an everlasting big show he had to take stock in the Capitoline Trust Company—starts next month—four million capital; I told you all about it. 'Oh, well,' he says, 'let's wait and think about it.' 'Wait!' says I; 'the Capitoline Trust Company won't wait for *you*, my boy. This is letting you in on the ground floor,' says I; 'and it's now or never.' 'Oh, let it wait,' says he. I don't know what's in-*to* the man."

"I don't know how well he knows his own business, Major," I said as I started again for Brede's end of the verandah. But I was troubled none the less. The Major could not have influenced the sale of one share of stock in the Capitoline Company. But that stock was a great investment; a rare chance for a purchaser with a few thousand dollars. Perhaps it was no more remarkable that Brede should not invest than that I should not; and yet it seemed to add one circumstance more to the other suspicious circumstances.

. . . . . .

When I went upstairs that evening, I found my wife putting her hair to bed—I don't know how I can better describe an operation familiar to every married man. I waited until the last tress was coiled up, and then I spoke.

"I've talked with Brede," I said, "and I didn't have to catechise him. He seemed to feel that some sort of explanation was looked for, and he was very outspoken. You were right about the children—that is, I must have misunderstood him. There are only two; but

the Matterhorn episode was simple enough. He didn't realise how dangerous it was until he had got so far into it that he couldn't back out; and he didn't tell her, because he'd left her here, you see; and under the circumstances——"

"Left her here!" cried my wife. "I've been sitting with her the whole afternoon, sewing, and she told me that he left her at Geneva, and came back and took her to Basle, and the baby was born there. Now I'm sure, dear, because I asked her."

"Perhaps I was mistaken when I thought he said she was on this side of the water," I suggested with bitter, biting irony.

"You poor dear, did I abuse you?" said my wife. "But do you know Mrs. Tabb said that *she* didn't know how many lumps of sugar he took in his coffee. Now that seems queer, doesn't it?"

It did. It was a small thing; but it looked queer, very queer.

. . . . . .

The next morning it was clear that war was declared against the Bredes. They came down to breakfast somewhat late, and as soon as they arrived the Biggles swooped up the last fragments that remained on their plates, and made a stately march out of the dining-room. Then Miss Hoogencamp arose and departed, leaving a whole fish-ball on her plate. Even as Atalanta might have dropped an apple behind her to tempt her pursuer to check his speed, so Miss Hoogencamp left that fish-ball behind her, and between her maiden self and Contamination.

We had finished our breakfast, my wife and I, before the Bredes appeared. We talked it over, and agreed that we were glad that we had not been obliged to take sides upon such insufficient testimony.

After breakfast it was the custom of the male half of the Jacobus household to go around the corner of the building and smoke their pipes and cigars, where they would not annoy the ladies. We sat under a trellis covered with a grape vine that had borne no grapes in the memory of man. This vine, however, bore leaves, and these, on that pleasant summer morning, shielded from us two persons who were in earnest conversation in the straggling, half-dead flower-garden at the side of the house.

"I don't want," we heard Mr. Jacobus say, "to enter in no man's *pry*-vacy; but I do want to know who it may be, like, that I hev in my house. Now what I ask of *you*—and I don't want you to take it as in no ways *personal*—is, hev you your merridge-licence with you?"

"No," we heard the voice of Mr. Bredo reply. "Have you

yours ? " I think it was a chance shot, but it told all the same. The Major (he was a widower), and Mr. Biggle and I looked at each other ; and Mr. Jacobus, on the other side of the grape-trellis, looked at—I don't know what—and was as silent as we were.

Where is *your* marriage-licence, married reader ? Do you know ? Four men, not including Mr Brede, stood or sate on one side or the other of that grape-trellis, and not one of them knew where his marriage-licence was. Each of us had had one—the Major had had three. But where were they ? Where is *yours ?* Tucked in your best-man's pocket ; deposited in his desk, or washed to a pulp in his white waistcoat (if white waistcoats be the fashion of the hour), washed out of existence—can you tell where it is ? Can you—unless you are one of those people who frame that interesting document and hang it upon their drawing-room walls ?

Mr. Brede's voice arose, after an awful stillness of what seemed like five minutes, and was, probably, thirty seconds—

" Mr. Jacobus, will you make out your bill at once, and let me pay it ? I shall leave by the six o'clock train. And will you also send the waggon for my trunks ? "

" I hain't said I wanted to hev ye leave——" began Mr. Jacobus ; but Brede cut him short.

" Bring me your bill."

" But," remonstrated Jacobus, " ef ye ain't——"

" Bring me your bill ! " said Mr. Brede.

. . . . . .

My wife and I went out for our morning's walk. But it seemed to us, when we looked at " our view," as if we could only see those invisible villages of which Brede had told us—that other side of the ridges and rises of which we catch no glimpse from lofty hills or from the heights of human self-esteem. We meant to stay out until the Bredes had taken their departure ; but we returned just in time to see Pete, the Jacobus darkey, the blacker of boots, the brusher of coats, the general handy-man of the house, loading the Bredes' trunks on the Jacobus waggon.

And, as we stepped upon the verandah, down came Mrs. Brede, leaning on Mr. Brede's arm as though she were ill ; and it was clear that she had been crying—there were heavy rings about her pretty black eyes. My wife took a step towards her.

" Look at that dress, dear," she whispered ; " she never thought anything like this was going to happen when she put *that* on."

It was a pretty, delicate, dainty dress, a graceful, narrow-striped affair. Her hat was trimmed with a narrow-striped silk of the same colour—maroon and white ; and in her hand she held a parasol that matched her dress. " She's had a new dress on twice a day," said my wife ; " but that's the prettiest yet. Oh, somehow—I'm *awfully* sorry they're going ! "

But going they were. They moved towards the steps. Mrs. Brede looked towards my wife, and my wife moved towards Mrs. Brede. But the ostracised woman, as though she felt the deep humiliation of her position, turned sharply away, and opened her parasol to shield her eyes from the sun. A shower of rice—a half-pound shower of rice—fell down over her pretty hat and her pretty dress, and fell in a splattering circle on the floor, outlining her skirts, and there it lay in a broad, uneven band, and bright in the morning sun.

Mrs. Brede was in my wife's arms, sobbing as if her young heart would break.

" Oh, you poor, dear, silly children ! " my wife cried, as Mrs. Brede sobbed on her shoulder ; " why *didn't* you tell us ? "

" W-w-we didn't want to be t-t-taken for a b-b-b-b-bridal couple," sobbed Mrs. Brede ; " and we d-d-didn't *dream* what awful lies we'd have to tell, and all the aw-aw-ful mixed-up mess of it. Oh, dear, dear, dear ! "

" Pete ! " commanded Mr. Jacobus, " put back them trunks. These folk stays here's long's they wants ter. Mr. Brede "—he held out a large, hard hand—" I'd orter 've known better," he said ; and my last doubt of Mr. Brede vanished as he shook that grimy hand in manly fashion. The two women were walking off toward " our view," each with an arm about the other's waist—touched by a sudden sisterhood of sympathy.

" Gentlemen," said Mr. Brede, addressing Jacobus, Biggle, the Major, and me, " there is a hostelry down the street where they sell honest New Jersey beer. I recognise the obligations of the situation."

We five men filed down the street, and the two women went toward the pleasant slope where the sunlight gilded the forehead of the great hill. On Mr. Jacobus's verandah lay a spattered circle of shining grains of rice. Two of Mr. Jacobus's pigeons flew down and picked up the shining grains, making grateful noises far down in their throats.

A LETTER AND A PARAGRAPH

HENRY CUYLER BUNNER

I

THE LETTER

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 16, 1883.

MY DEAR WILL,—You cannot be expected to remember it, but this is the fifth anniversary of my wedding day, and to-morrow—it will be to-morrow before this letter is closed—is my birthday—my fortieth. My head is full of those thoughts which the habit of my life moves me to put on paper, where I can best express them; and yet which must be written for only the friendliest of eyes. It is not the least of my happiness in this life that I have one friend to whom I can unlock my heart as I can to you.

The wife has just been putting your namesake to sleep. Don't infer that, even on the occasion of this family feast, he has been allowed to sit up until half-past eleven. He went to bed properly enough, with a tear or two, at eight; but when his mother stole into his room just now, after her custom, I heard his small voice raised in drowsy inquiry; and I followed her, and slipped the curtain of the doorway aside, and looked. But I did not go into the room.

The shaded lamp was making a yellow glory in one spot—the head of the little brass crib where my wife knelt by my boy. I saw the little face, so like hers, turned up to her. There was a smile on it that I knew was a reflection of hers. He was winking in a merry half-attempt to keep awake; but wakefulness was slipping away from him under the charm of that smile that I could not see. His brown eyes closed, and opened for an instant, and closed again as the tender, happy hush of a child's sleep settled down upon him, and he was gone where we in our heavier slumbers shall hardly follow him. Then, before I could see my wife's face as she bent and kissed him, I let the curtain fall, and crept back here, to sit by the last of the fire, and see that sacred sight again with the spiritual eyes, and to dream wonderingly over the unspeakable happiness that has in some mysterious way come to me, undeserving.

I tell you, Will, that moment was to me like one of those moments of waking that we know in childhood, when we catch the going of a dream too subtly sweet to belong to this earth—a glad vision, gone before our eyes can open wide; not to be figured into any earthly idea, leaving in its passage a joy so high and fine that the poets tell us it is a memory of some heaven from which our young souls are yet fresh.

You can understand how it is that I find it hard to realise that there can be such things in my life; for you know what that life was up to a few years ago. I am like a man who has spent his first thirty years in a cave. It takes more than a decade above ground to make him quite believe in the sun and the blue of the sky.

I was sitting just now before the hearth, with my feet in the bearskin rug you sent us two Christmases ago. The light of the low wood fire was chasing the shadows around the room, over my books and my pictures, and all the fine and gracious luxuries with which I may now make my eyes and my heart glad, and pamper the tastes that grow with feeding. I was taking count, so to speak, of my prosperity—the material treasures, the better treasure that I find in such portion of fame as the world has allotted me, and the treasure of treasures across the threshold of the next room—in the next room? No—there, here, in every room, in every corner of the house, filling it with peace, is the gentle and holy spirit of love.

As I sat and thought, my mind went back to the day that you and I first met, twenty-two years ago—twenty-two in February next. In twenty-two years more I could not forget that hideous first day in the city room of the *Morning Record*. I can see the great gloomy room, with its meagre gas-jets lighting up, here and there, a pale face at a desk, and bringing out in ghastly spots the ugliness of the ink-smeared walls. A winter rain was pouring down outside. I could feel its chill and damp in the room, though little of it was to be seen through the grimy window panes. The composing-room in the rear sent a smell of ink and benzine to permeate the moist atmosphere. The rumble and shiver of the great presses printing the weekly came up from below. I sat there in my wet clothes and waited for my first assignment. I was eighteen, poor as a church mouse, green, desperately hopeful after a boy's fashion, and with nothing in my head but the Latin and Greek of my one single year at college. My spirit had sunk down far out of sight. My heart

beat nervously at every sound of that awful city editor's voice, as he called up his soldiers one by one and assigned them to duty. I could only silently pray that he would "give me an easy one," and that I should not disgrace myself in the doing of it. By Jove, Will, what an old martinet Baldwin was, for all his good heart! Do you remember that sharp, crackling voice of his, and the awful "Be brief! be brief!" that always drove all capacity for condensation out of a man's head, and set him to stammering out his story with wordy incoherence? Baldwin is on the *Record* still. I wonder what poor devil is trembling at this hour under that disconcerting adjuration.

A wretched day that was! The hours went slow as grief. Smeary little bare-armed fiends trotted in from the composing-room and out again, bearing fluttering galley-proofs. Bedraggled, hollow-eyed men came in from the streets and set their soaked umbrellas to steam against the heater, and passed into the lion's den to feed him with news, and were sent out again to take up their half-cooked umbrellas and go forth to forage for more. Every one, I thought, gave me one brief glance of contempt and curiosity, and put me out of his thoughts. Every one had some business—every one but me. The men who had been waiting with me were called up one by one and detailed to work. I was left alone.

Then a new horror came to torture my nervously active imagination. Had my superior officer forgotten his new recruit? Or could he find no task mean enough for my powers? This filled me at first with a sinking shame, and then with a hot rage and sense of wrong. Why should he thus slight me? Had I not a right to be tried at least? Was there any duty he could find that I would not perform or die? I would go to him and tell him that I had come there to work; and would make him give me the work. No, I should simply be snubbed, and sent to my seat like a schoolboy, or perhaps discharged on the spot. I must bear my humiliation in silence.

I looked up and saw you entering, with your bright, ruddy boy's face shining with wet, beaming a greeting to all the room. In my soul I cursed you, at a venture, for your light-heartedness and your look of cheery self-confidence. What a vast stretch of struggle and success set you above me—you, the reporter, above me, the novice! And just then came the awful summons—"Barclay! Barclay!"—I shall hear that strident note at the judgment day. I went in and

got my orders, and came out with them, all in a sort of daze that must have made Baldwin think me an idiot. And then you came up to me and scraped acquaintance in a desultory way, to hide your kind intent; and gave me a hint or two as to how to obtain a full account of the biennial meeting of the Post-Pliocene Mineralogical Society, or whatever it was, without diving too deeply into the Post-Pliocene period. I would have fought for you to the death, at that moment.

'Twas a small matter, but the friendship begun in manly and helpful kindness has gone on for twenty-two years in mutual faith and loyalty; and the growth dignifies the seed.

A sturdy growth it was in its sapling days. It was in the late spring that we decided to take the room together in St. Mark's Place. A big room and a poor room, indeed, on the third story of that "battered caravanserai," and for twelve long years it held us and our hopes and our despairs and our troubles and our joys.

I don't think I have forgotten one detail of that room. There is the generous old fireplace, insultingly bricked up by modern poverty, all save the meagre niche that holds our fire—when we can have a fire. There is the great second-hand table—our first purchase—where we sit and work for immortality in the scant intervals of working for life. Your drawer, with the manuscript of your *Concordance of Political Economy*, is to the right. Mine is to the left; it holds the unfinished play, and the poems that might better have been unfinished. There are the two narrow cots—yours to the left of the door as you enter; mine to the right.

How strange that I can see it all so clearly, now that all is different!

Yet I can remember myself coming home at one o'clock at night, dragging my tired feet up those dark, still, tortuous stairs, gripping the shaky baluster for aid. I open the door—I can feel the little old-fashioned brass knob in my palm even now—and I look to the left. Ah, you are already at home and in bed. I need not look toward the table. There is money—a little—in the common treasury; and, in accordance with our regular compact, I know there stand on that table twin bottles of beer, half a loaf of rye bread, and a double palm's-breadth of Swiss cheese. You are staying your hunger in sleep; for one may not eat until the other comes. I will wake you up, and we shall feast together and talk over the day that is dead and the day that is begun.

Strange, is it not, that I should have some trouble to realise that this is only a memory—I, with my feet in the bearskin rug that it would have beggared the two of us, or a dozen like us, to purchase in those days. Strange that my mind should be wandering on the crude work of my boyhood and my early manhood. I who have won name and fame, as the world would say. I, to whom young men come for advice and encouragement, as to a tried veteran! Strange that I should be thinking of a time when even your true and tireless friendship could not quench a subtle hunger at my heart, a hunger for a more dear and intimate comradeship. I, with the tenderest of wives scarce out of my sight; even in her sleep she is no further from me than my own soul.

Strangest of all this, that the mad agony of grief, the passion of desolation that came upon me when our long partnership was dissolved for ever, should now be nothing but a memory, like other memories, to be summoned up out of the resting-places of the mind, toyed with, idly questioned, and dismissed with a sigh and a smile! What a real thing it was just ten years ago; what a very present pain! Believe me, Will—yes, I want you to believe this—that in those first hours of loneliness I could have welcomed death; death would have fallen upon me as calmly as sleep has fallen upon my boy in the room beyond there.

You knew nothing of this then; I suppose you but half believe it now; for our parting was manly enough. I kept as stiff an upper lip as you did, for all there was less hair on it. Perhaps it seems extravagant to you. But there was a deal of difference between our cases. You had turned your pen to money-making, at the call of love; you were going to Stillwater to marry the judge's daughter, and to become a great landowner and mayor of Stillwater and millionaire—or what is it now? And much of this you foresaw, or hoped for, at least. Hope is something. But for me? I was left in the third story of a poor lodging-house in St. Mark's Place, my best friend gone from me; with neither remembrance nor hope of Love to live on, and with my last story back from *all* the magazines.

We will not talk about it. Let me get back to my pleasant library with the books and the pictures and the glancing firelight, and me with my feet in your bearskin rug, listening to my wife's step in the next room.

To your ear, for our communion has been so long and so close that to either one of us the faintest inflection of the other's voice speaks clearer than formulated words; to your ear there must be something akin to a tone of regret—regret for the old days—in what I have just said. And would it be strange if there were? A poor soldier of fortune who had been set to a man's work before he had done with his meagre boyhood, who had passed from recruit to the place of a young veteran in that great, hard-fighting, unresting pioneer army of journalism; was he the man, all of a sudden, to stretch his toughened sinews out and let them relax in the glow of the home hearth? Would not his legs begin to twitch for the road? would he not be wild to feel again the rain in his weather-beaten face? Would you think it strange if at night he should toss in his white, soft bed, longing to change it for a blanket on the turf, with the broad procession of sunlit worlds sweeping over his head, beyond the blue spaces of the night? And even if the dear face on the pillow next him were to wake and look at him with reproachful surprise; and even if warm arms drew him back to his new allegiance; would not his heart in dreams go throbbing to the rhythm of the drum or the music of songs sung by the camp-fire?

It was so at the beginning, in the incredible happiness of the first year, and even after the boy's birth. Do you know it was months before I could accept that boy as a *fact*? If, at any moment, he had vanished from my sight, crib and all, I should not have been surprised. I was not sure of him until he began to show his mother's eyes.

Yes, even in those days some of the old leaven worked in me. I had moments of that old barbaric freedom which we used to rejoice in—that feeling of being answerable to nothing in the world save my own will—the sense of untrammelled, careless power.

Do you remember the night that we walked till sunrise? You remember how hot it was at midnight, when we left the office, and how the moonlight on the statue above the City Hall seemed to invite us fieldward, where no gaslight glared, no torches flickered. So we walked idly northward, through the black, silence-stricken down-town streets, through that feverish, unresting central region that lies between the vileness of Houston Street and the calm and spacious dignity of the brown-stone ways where the closed and darkened dwellings looked like huge tombs in the pallid light of the

moon. We passed the suburban belt of shanties; we passed the garden-girt villas beyond them, and it was from the hill above Spuyten Duyvil that we saw the first colour of the morning upon the face of the Palisades.

It would have taken very little in that moment to set us off to tramping the broad earth, for the pure joy of free wayfaring. What was there to hold us back? No tie of home or kin. All we had in the world to leave behind us was some futile scribbling on various sheets of paper. And of that sort of thing both our heads were full enough. I think it was but the veriest chance that, having begun that walk, we did not go on and get our fill of wandering, and ruin our lives.

Well, that same wild, adventurous spirit came upon me now and then. There were times when, for the moment, I forgot that I had a wife and a child. There were times when I remembered them as a burden. Why should I not say this? It is the history of every married man—at least of every manly man—though he be married to the best woman in the world. It means no lack of love. It is as unavoidable as the leap of the blood in you that answers a trumpet-call.

At first I was frightened, and fought against it as against something that might grow upon me. I reproached myself for disloyalty in thought. Ah! what need had *I* to fight? What need had *I* to choke down rebellious fancies, while my wife's love was working that miracle that makes two spirits one?

What is it, this union that comes to us as a surprise, and remains for all outside an incommunicable mystery? What is this that makes our unmarried love seem so slight and childish a thing? You and I, who know it, know that it is no mere fruit of intimacy and usage, although in its growth it keeps pace with these. We know that in some subtle way it has been given to a man to see a woman's soul as he sees his own, and to a woman to look into a man's heart as if it were indeed hers. But the friend who sits at my table, seeing that my wife and I understand each other at a simple meeting of the eyes, makes no more of it than he does of the glance of intelligence which, with close friends, often takes the place of speech. He never dreams of the sweet delight with which we commune together in a language that he cannot understand—that he cannot hear—a language that has no formulated words, feeling answering feeling.

It is not wonderful that I should wish to give expression to the

Thomas Nelson Page

gratitude with which I have seen my life made to blossom thus ; my thankfulness for the love which has made me not only a happier, but, I humbly believe, a wiser and a better-minded man. But I know too well the hopelessness of trying to find words to describe what, were I a poet, my best song might but faintly, faintly echo.

I thought I heard a rustle behind me just now. In a little while my wife will come softly into the room, and softly up to where I am sitting, stepping silently across your bearskin rug, and will lay one hand softly on my left shoulder, while the other slips down this arm with which I write, until it falls and closes lightly, yet with loving firmness, on my hand that holds the pen. And I shall say, " Only the last words to Will and his wife, dear." And she will release my hand, and will lift her own, I think, to caress the patch of grey hair on my temple ; it is a way she has, as though it were some pitiful scar, and she will say, " Give them my love, and tell them they must not fail us this Christmas. I want them to see how our Willy has grown." And when she says " Our Willy," the hand on my shoulder will instinctively close a little, clingingly ; and she will bend her head, and put her face close to mine, and I shall turn to look into her eyes.

. . . . . .

Bear with me, my dear Will, until I have told you why I have written this letter, and what it means. I have concealed one thing from you for the last six months. I have disease of the heart, and the doctor has told me that I may die at any moment. Somehow, I think—I know the moment is close at hand ; I shall soon go to that narrow cot on the right of the door, and I do not believe I shall wake up in the morning with the sun in my eyes, to look across the room and see that its companion is gone.

For I am in the old room, Will, as you know, and it is not ten years since you went away, but two days. The picture that has seemed real to me as I wrote these pages is fading, and the thin gas-jet flickers and sinks as it always did in these first morning hours. I can hear the roar of the last Harlem train swell and sink, and the sharp clink of car-bells break the silence that follows. The wind is gasping and struggling in the chimney, and blowing a white powdery ash down on the hearth. I have just burnt my poems and the play. Both the table drawers are empty now ; and soon enough the two empty chairs will stare at each other across the bare table. What a wild

dream have I dreamt in all this emptiness! Just now, I thought indeed that it was true. I thought I heard a woman's step behind me, and I turned—

Peace be with you, Will, in the fulness of your love. I am going to sleep. Perhaps I shall dream it all again, and shall hear that soft footfall when the turn of the night comes, and the pale light through the ragged blind, and the end of a long loneliness.

After I am dead, I wish you to think of me not as I was, but as I wanted to be. I have tried to show you that I have led by your side a happier and dearer life of hope and aspiration than the one you saw. I have tried to leave your memory a picture of me that you will not shrink from calling up when you have a quiet hour and time for thought of the friend whom you knew well; but whom you may, perhaps, know better now that he is dead.

REGINALD BARCLAY.

II

THE PARAGRAPH

[From the *New York Herald* of Nov. 18, 1883.]

Reginald Barclay, a journalist, was found dead in his bed at 15 St. Mark's Place, yesterday morning. No inquest was held, as Mr. Barclay had been known to be suffering from disease of the heart, and his death was not unexpected. The deceased came originally from Oneida County, and was regarded as a young journalist of considerable promise. He had been for some years on the city staff of the *Record*, and was the correspondent of several out-of-town papers. He had also contributed to the monthly magazines occasional poems and short stories, which showed the possession, in some measure, of the imaginative faculty. Mr. Barclay was about thirty years of age, and unmarried.

FREDERIC JESUP STIMSON
B. 1855

MRS. KNOLLYS

MRS. KNOLLYS was a young English bride, sunny-haired, hopeful-eyed, with lips that parted to make you love them—parted before they smiled, and all the soft regions of her face broke into attendant dimples. And then, lest you should think it meant for you, she looked quickly up to "Charles," as she would then call him even to strangers, and Charles looked down to her. Charles was a short foot taller, with much the same hair and eyes, thick flossy whiskers, broad shoulders, and a bass voice. This was in the days before political economy cut Hymen's wings. Charles, like Mary, had little money, but great hopes; and he was clerk in a government office, with a friendly impression of everybody and much trust in himself. And old Harry Colquhoun, his chief, had given them six weeks to go to Switzerland and be happy in, all in celebration of Charles Knollys's majority and marriage to his young wife. So they had both forgotten heaven for the nonce, having a passable substitute; but the powers divine overlooked them pleasantly and forgave it. And even the phlegmatic driver of their *Einspänner* looked back from the corner of his eye at the *schöne Engländerin*, and compared her mentally with the far-famed beauty of the Königssee. So they rattled on in their curious conveyance, with the pole in the middle and the one horse out on one side, and still found more beauty in each other's eyes than in the world about them. Although Charles was only one-and-twenty, Mary Knollys was barely eighteen, and to her he seemed godlike in his age, as in all other things. Her life had been as simple as it had been short. She remembered being a little girl, and then the next thing that occurred was Charles Knollys, and positively the next thing she remembered of importance was being Mrs. Charles Knollys; so that old Mrs. Knollys, her guardian aunt and his, had first called her a love of a baby, and then but a baby in love. All this, of course, was five-and-forty years ago, for you know how old she was when she went again to Switzerland last summer —three-and-sixty.

They first saw the great mountains from the summit of the Schafberg. This is a little height, three-cornered, between three lakes; a natural Belvedere for Central Europe. Mr. and Mrs. Knollys were seated on a couch of Alpine roses behind a rhododendron bush watching the sunset; but as Charles was desirous of kissing Mrs. Knollys, and the rhododendron bush was not thick enough, they were waiting for the sun to go down. He was very slow in doing this, and by way of consolation Knollys was keeping his wife's hand hidden in the folds of her dress. Undoubtedly a modern lady would have been talking of the scenery, giving word-colour pictures of the view; but I am afraid Mrs. Knollys had been looking at her husband, and talking with him of the cottage they had bought in a Surrey village, not far from Box Hill, and thinking how the little carvings and embroideries would look there which they had bought abroad. And, indeed, Mrs. Charles secretly thought Box Hill an eminence far preferable to the Venediger, and Charles's face an infinitely more interesting sight than any lake, however expressive. But the sun, looking askance at them through the lower mist, was not jealous; all the same he spread his glory lavishly for them, and the bright little mirror of a lake twinkled cannily upward from below. Finally it grew dark; then there was less talking. It was full night when they went in, she leaning on his arm and looking up; and the moonbeam on the snowy shoulder of the Glockner, twenty leagues away, came over, straightway, from the mountain to her face. Three days later, Charles Knollys, crossing with her the lower portion of the Pasterzen glacier, slipped into a crevasse, and vanished utterly from the earth.

II

All this you know. And I was also told more of the young girl, bride and widow at eighteen; how she sought to throw herself into the clear blue gulf; how she refused to leave Heiligenblut; how she would sit, tearless, by the rim of the crevasse, day after day, and gaze into its profundity. A guide or man was always with her at these times, for it was still feared she would follow her young husband to the depths of that still sea. Her aunt went over from England to her; the summer waxed; autumn storms set in; but no power could win her from the place whence Charles had gone.

If there was a time worse for her than that first moment, it was

when they told her that his body never could be found. They did not dare to tell her this for many days, but busied themselves with idle cranes and ladders, and made futile pretences with ropes. Some of the big, simple-hearted guides even descended into the chasm, absenting themselves for an hour or so, to give her an idea that something was being done. Poor Mrs. Knollys would have followed them had she been allowed, to wander through the purple galleries, calling Charles. It was well she could not; for all Kaspar could do was to lower himself a hundred yards or so, chisel out a niche, and stand in it, smoking his honest pipe to pass the time, and trying to fancy he could hear the murmur of the waters down below. Meantime Mrs. Knollys strained her eyes, peering downward from above, leaning on the rope about her waist, looking over the clear brink of the bergschrund.

It was the Herr Doctor Zimmermann who first told her the truth. Not that the good Doctor meant to do so. The Herr Doctor had had his attention turned to glaciers by some rounded stones in his garden by the Traunsee, and more particularly by the Herr Privatdocent Splüthner. Splüthner, like Uncle Toby, had his hobby-horse, his pet conjuring words, his gods *ex machina*, which he brought upon the field in scientific emergencies; and these gods, as with Thales, were Fire and Water. Craters and flood were his accustomed scapegoats, upon whose heads were charged all things unaccountable; and the Herr Doctor, who had only one element left to choose from, and that a passive one, but knew, on general principles, that Splüthner must be wrong, got as far off as he could and took Ice. And Splüthner having pooh-poohed this, Zimmermann rode his hypothesis with redoubled zeal. He became convinced that ice was the embodiment of orthodoxy. Fixing his professional spectacles on his substantial nose, he went into Carinthia and ascended the great Venice mountains, much as he would have performed any other scientific experiment. Then he encamped on the shores of the Pasterzen glacier, and proceeded to make a study of it.

So it happened that the Doctor, taking a morning stroll over the subject of his experiment, in search of small things, which might verify his theory, met Mrs. Knollys sitting in her accustomed place. The Doctor had been much puzzled, that morning, on finding in a rock at the foot of the glacier the impression, or sign-manual as it were, of a certain fish, whose acquaintance the Doctor had previously

made only in tropical seas. This fact seeming, superficially, to chime in with Splüthnerian mistakes in a most heterodox way, the Doctor's mind had for a moment been diverted from the ice; and he was wondering what the fish had been going to do in that particular gallery, and secretly doubting whether it had known its own mind, and gone thither with the full knowledge and permission of its maternal relative. Indeed, the good Doctor would probably have ascribed its presence to the malicious and personal causation of the devil, but that the one point on which he and Splüthner were agreed was the ignoring of unscientific hypotheses. The Doctor's objections to the devil were none the less strenuous for being purely scientific.

Thus ruminating, the Doctor came to the crevasse where Mrs. Knollys was sitting, and to which a little path had now been worn from the inn. There was nothing of scientific interest about the fair young English girl, and the Doctor did not notice her; but he took from his waistcoat-pocket a leaden bullet, moulded by himself, and marked "Johannes Carpentarius, Juvavianus, A.U.C. 2590," and dropped it, with much satisfaction, into the crevasse. Mrs. Knollys gave a little cry; the bullet was heard for some seconds tinkling against the sides of the chasm; the tinkles grew quickly fainter, but they waited in vain for the noise of the final fall. "May the Splüthner live that he may learn by it," muttered the Doctor; "I can never recover it."

Then he remembered that the experiment had been attended with a sound unaccounted for by the conformity of the bullet to the laws of gravitation; and looking up he saw Mrs. Knollys in front of him, no longer crying, but very pale. Zimmermann started, and in his confusion dropped his best brass registering thermometer, which also rattled down the abyss.

"You say," whispered Mrs. Knollys, "that it can never be recovered!"

"Madam," spoke the Doctor, doffing his hat, "how would you recofer from a blace when the smallest approximation which I haf yet been able to make puts the depth from the surface to the bed of the gletscher at vrom sixteen hundred to sixteen hundred and sixty *mètres* in distance?" Doctor Zimmermann spoke very good English; and he pushed his hat upon the back of his head, and assumed his professional attitude.

"But they all were trying——" Mrs. Knollys spoke faintly.

" They said that they hoped he could be recovered." The stranger was the oldest gentleman she had seen, and Mrs. Knollys felt almost like confiding in him. " Oh, I must have the—the body." She closed in a sob ; but the Herr Doctor caught at the last word, and this suggested to him only the language of scientific experiment.

" Recofer it ? If, madam," Zimmermann went on with all the satisfaction attendant on the enunciation of a scientific truth, " we take a body and drop it in the schrund of this gletscher ; and the ice-stream moves so slower at its base than on the upper part, and the ice will cover it ; efen if we could reach the base, which is a mile in depth. Then, see you, it is all caused by the motion of the ice——"

But at this Mrs. Knollys had given a faint cry, and her guide rushed up angrily to the old professor, who stared helplessly forward. " God will help me, sir," said she to the Doctor, and she gave the guide her arm and walked wearily away.

The professor still stared in amazement at her enthusiasm for scientific experiment and the passion with which she greeted his discoveries. Here was a person who utterly refused to be referred to the agency of ice, or even, like Splüthner, of Fire and Water ; and went out of the range of allowable hypotheses to call upon a Noumenon. Now both Splüthner and Zimmermann had studied all natural agencies and made allowance for them, but for the Divine they had always hitherto proved an alibi. The Doctor could make nothing of it.

At the inn that evening he saw Mrs. Knollys with swollen eyes ; and remembering the scene of the afternoon, he made inquiries about her of the innkeeper. The latter had heard the guide's account of the meeting ; and as soon as Zimmermann had made plain what he had told her of the falling body, " Triple blockhead ! " said he. " *Es war ihr Mann.*" The Herr Professor staggered back into his seat ; and the kindly innkeeper ran upstairs to see what had happened to his poor young guest.

Mrs. Knollys had recovered from the first shock by this time, but the truth could no longer be withheld. The innkeeper could but nod his head sadly, when she told him that to recover her Charles was hopeless. All the guides said the same thing. The poor girl's husband had vanished from the world as utterly as if his body had been burned to ashes and scattered in the pathway of the winds. Charles Knollys was gone, utterly gone ; no more to be met with

by his girl-wife, save as spirit to spirit, soul to soul, in ultramundane place. The fair-haired young Englishman lived but in her memory, as his soul, if still existent, lived in places indeterminate, unknowable to Doctor Zimmermann and his compeers. Slowly Mrs. Knollys acquired the belief that she was never to see her Charles again. Then, at last, she resolved to go—to go home. Her strength now gave way; and when her aunt left she had with her but the ghost of Mrs. Knollys—a broken figure, drooping in the carriage, veiled in black. The innkeeper and all the guides stood bareheaded, silent, about the door, as the carriage drove off, bearing the bereaved widow back to England.

III

When the Herr Doctor had heard the innkeeper's answer, he sat for some time with his hands planted on his knees, looking through his spectacles at the opposite wall. Then he lifted one hand and struck his brow impatiently. It was his way, when a chemical reaction had come out wrong.

"Triple blockhead!" said he; "triple blockhead, thou art so bad as Splüthner." No self-condemnation could have been worse to him than this. Thinking again of Mrs. Knollys, he gave one deep, gruff sob. Then he took his hat, and going out, wandered by the shore of the glacier in the night, repeating to himself the Englishwoman's words: "*They said that they hoped he could be recovered.*" Zimmermann came to the tent where he kept his instruments, and stood there, looking at the sea of ice. He went to his measuring pegs, two rods of iron: one sunk deep and frozen in the glacier, the other drilled into a rock on the shore. "Triple blockhead!" said he again, "thou art worse than Splüthner. The Splüthner said the glacier did not move; thou, thou knowest that it does." He sighted from his rods to the mountain opposite. There was a slight and all but imperceptible change of direction from the day before.

He could not bear to see the English girl again, and all the next day was absent from the inn. For a month he stopped at Heiligenblut, and busied himself with his instruments. The guides of the place greeted him coldly every day, as they started on their glacier excursions or their chamois hunting. But none the less did Zimmermann return the following summer, and work upon his great essay in refutation of the Splüthner.

Mrs. Knollys went back to the little cottage in Surrey, and lived there. The chests and cases she brought back lay unopened in the store-room ; the little rooms of the cottage that was to be their home remained bare and unadorned, as Charles had seen them last. She could not bring herself to alter them now. What she had looked forward to do with him she had no strength to do alone. She rarely went out. There was no place where she could go to think of him. He was gone ; gone from England, gone from the very surface of the earth. If he had only been buried in some quiet English churchyard, she thought—some green place lying open to the sun, where she could go and scatter flowers on his grave, where she could sit and look forward amid her tears to the time when she should lie side by side with him—they would then be separated for her short life alone. Now it seemed to her that they were far apart for ever.

But late the next summer she had a letter from the place. It was from Dr. Zimmermann. There is no need here to trace the quaint German phrases, the formalism, the cold terms of science in which he made his meaning plain. It spoke of erosion ; of the movement of the summer ; of the action of the under-waters on the ice. And it told her, with tender sympathy oddly blended with the pride of scientific success, that he had given a year's most careful study to the place ; with all his instruments of measurement he had tested the relentless glacier's flow ; and it closed by assuring her that her husband might yet be found—in five-and-forty years. In five-and-forty years—the poor Professor staked his scientific reputation on the fact—in five-and-forty years she might return, and the glacier would give up its dead.

This letter made Mrs. Knollys happier. It made her willing to live ; it made her almost long to live until old age—that her Charles's body might be given back. She took heart to beautify her little home. The trifling articles she had bought with Charles were now brought out—the little curiosities and pictures he had given her on their wedding journey. She would ask how such and such a thing looked, turning her pretty head to some kind visitor, as she ranged them on the walls ; and now and then she would have to lay the picture down and cry a little, silently, as she remembered where Charles had told her it would look best. Still, she sought to furnish the rooms as they had planned them in their mind ; she made her surroundings, as nearly as she could, as they had pictured them together.

One room she never went into ; it was the room Charles had meant to have for the nursery. She had no child.

But she changed, as we all change, with the passing of the years. I first remember her as a woman middle-aged, sweet-faced, hardly like a widow, nor yet like an old maid. She was rather like a young girl in love, with her lover absent on a long journey. She lived more with the memory of her husband, she clung to him more, than if she had had a child. She never married ; you would have guessed that ; but, after the Professor's letter, she never quite seemed to realise that her husband was dead. Was he not coming back to her ?

Never in all my knowledge of dear English women have I known a woman so much loved. In how many houses was she always the most welcome guest ! How often we boys would go to her for sympathy ! I know she was the confidante of all our love affairs. I cannot speak for girls ; but I fancy she was much the same with them. Many of us owed our life's happiness to her. She would chide us gently in our pettiness and folly, and teach us, by her very presence and example, what thing it was that alone could keep life sweet. How well we all remember the little Surrey cottage, the little home fireside where the husband had never been ! I think she grew to imagine his presence, even the presence of children : boys, curly-headed, like Charles, and sweet, blue-eyed daughters ; and the fact that it was all imagining seemed but to make the place more holy. Charles still lived to her as she had believed him in the month that they were married ; he lived through life with her as her young love had fancied he would be. She never thought of evil that might have occurred ; of failing affection, of cares. Her happiness was in her mind alone ; so all the earthly part was absent.

There were but two events in her life—that which was past and that which was to come. She had lived through his loss ; now she lived on for his recovery. But, as I have said, she changed, as all things mortal change ; all but the earth and the ice-stream and the stars above it. She read much, and her mind grew deep and broad, none the less gentle with it all ; she was wiser in the world ; she knew the depths of human hope and sorrow. You remember her only as an old lady whom we loved. Only her heart did not change—I forgot that ; her heart, and the memory of that last loving smile upon his face, as he bent down to look into her eyes, before he slipped and fell. She lived on, and waited for his body, as possibly his other self—who

knows?—waited for hers. As she grew older she grew taller; her eyes were quieter, her hair a little straighter, darker than of yore; her face changed, only the expression remained the same. Mary Knollys!

Human lives rarely look more than a year, or five, ahead; Mary Knollys looked five-and-forty. Many of us wait, and grow weary in waiting, for those few years alone, and for some living friend. Mary Knollys waited five-and-forty years—for the dead. Still, after that first year, she never wore all black; only silvery greys, and white with a black ribbon or two. I have said that she almost seemed to think her husband living. She would fancy his doing this and that with her; how he would joy in this good fortune, or share her sorrows—which were few, mercifully. His memory seemed to be a living thing to her, to go through life with her, hand in hand; it changed as she grew old; it altered itself to suit her changing thought; until the very memory of her memory seemed to make it sure that he had really been alive with her, really shared her happiness or sorrow, in the far-off days of her earliest widowhood. It hardly seemed that he had been gone already then—she remembered him so well. She could not think that he had never been with her in their little cottage. And now, at sixty, I know she thought of him as an old person too; sitting by their fireside, late in life, mature, deep-souled, wise with the wisdom of years, going back with her, fondly, to recall the old, old happiness of their bridal journey, when they set off for the happy honeymoon abroad, and the long life now past stretched brightly out before them both. She never spoke of this, and you children never knew it; but it was always in her mind.

There was a plain stone in the little Surrey churchyard, now grey and moss-grown with the rains of forty years, on which you remember reading: "Charles Knollys—lost in Carinthia"—— This was all she would have inscribed; he was but lost; no one *knew* that he was dead. Was he not yet to be found? There was no grassy mound beside it; the earth was smooth. Not even the date was there. But Mrs. Knollys never went to read it. She waited until he should come; until that last journey, repeating the travels of their wedding-days, when she should go to Germany to bring him home.

So the woman's life went on in England, and the glacier in the Alps moved on slowly; and the woman waited for it to be gone.

IV

In the summer of 1882, the little Carinthian village of Heiligenblut was haunted by two persons. One was a young German scientist, with long hair and spectacles; the other was a tall English lady, slightly bent, with a face wherein the finger of time had deeply written tender things. Her hair was white as silver and she wore a long black veil. Their habits were strangely similar. Every morning, when the eastern light shone deepest into the ice-cavern at the base of the great Pasterzen glacier, these two would walk thither; then both would sit for an hour or two and peer into its depths. Neither knew why the other was there. The woman would go back for an hour in the late afternoon; the man, never. He knew that the morning light was necessary for his search.

The man was the famous young Zimmermann, son of his father, the old Doctor, long since dead. But the Herr Doctor had written a famous tract, when late in life, refuting all Splüthners, past, present, and to come; and had charged his son, in his dying moments, as a most sacred trust, that he should repair to the base of the Pasterzen glacier in the year 1882, where he would find a leaden bullet, graven with his father's name, and the date A.U.C. 2590. All this would be vindication of his father's science. Splüthner, too, was a very old man, and Zimmermann the younger (for even he was no longer young) was fearful lest Splüthner should not live to witness his own refutation. The woman and the man never spoke to each other.

Alas, no one could have known Mrs. Knollys for the fair English girl who had been there in the young days of the century; not even the innkeeper, had he been there. But he, too, was long since dead. Mrs. Knollys was now bent and white-haired; she had forgotten, herself, how she had looked in those old days. Her life had been lived. She was now like a woman of another world; it seemed another world in which her fair hair had twined about her husband's fingers, and she and Charles had stood upon the evening mountain, and looked in one another's eyes. That was the world of her wedding-days, but it seemed more like a world she had left when born on earth. And now he was coming back to her in this. Meantime the great Pasterzen glacier had moved on, marking only the centuries; the men upon its borders had seen no change; the same great waves lifted their snowy heads upon its surface; the same crevasse still was

where he had fallen. At night, the moonbeams, falling, still shivered off its glassy face ; its pale presence filled the night, and immortality lay brooding in its hollows.

Friends were with Mrs. Knollys, but she left them at the inn. One old guide remembered her, and asked to bear her company. He went with her in the morning, and sat a few yards from her, waiting. In the afternoon she went alone. He would not have credited you, had you told him that the glacier moved. He thought it but an Englishwoman's fancy, but he waited with her. Himself had never forgotten that old day. And Mrs. Knollys sat there silently, searching the clear depths of the ice, that she might find her husband.

One night she saw a ghost. The latest beam of the sun, falling on a mountain opposite, had shone back into the ice-cavern ; and seemingly deep within, in the grave azure light, she fancied she saw a face turned toward her. She even thought she saw Charles's yellow hair, and the self-same smile his lips had worn when he bent down to her before he fell. It could be but a fancy. She went home, and was silent with her friends about what had happened. In the moonlight she went back, and again the next morning before dawn. She told no one of her going ; but the old guide met her at the door, and walked silently behind her. She had slept, the glacier ever present in her dreams.

The sun had not yet risen when she came ; and she sat a long time in the cavern, listening to the murmur of the river, flowing under the glacier at her feet. Slowly the dawn began, and again she seemed to see the shimmer of a face—such a face as one sees in the coals of a dying fire. Then the full sun came over the eastern mountain, and the guide heard a woman's cry. There before her was Charles Knollys ! The face seemed hardly pale ; and there was the same faint smile—a smile like her memory of it, five-and-forty years gone by. Safe in the clear ice, still, unharmed, there lay—O God ! not her Charles ; not the Charles of her own thought, who had lived through life with her and shared her sixty years ; not the old man she had borne thither in her mind—but a boy, a boy of one-and-twenty lying asleep, a ghost from another world coming to confront her from the distant past, immortal in the immortality of the glacier. There was his quaint coat, of the fashion of half a century before ; his blue eyes open ; his young, clear brow ; all the form of the past she had forgotten ; and she his bride stood there to welcome him,

with her wrinkles, her bent figure, and thin white hairs. She was living, he was dead; and she was two-and-forty years older than he.

Then at last the long-kept tears came to her, and she bent her white head in the snow. The old man came up with his pick, silently, and began working in the ice. The woman lay weeping, and the boy with his still, faint smile lay looking at them, through the clear ice-veil, from his open eyes.

I believe that the Professor found his bullet; I know not. I believe that the scientific world rang with his name and the thesis that he published on the glacier's motion, and the changeless temperature his father's lost thermometer had shown. All this you may read. I know no more.

But I know that in the English churchyard there are now two graves, and a single stone, to Charles Knollys and Mary, his wife; and the boy of one-and-twenty sleeps there with his bride of sixty-three; his young frame with her old one, his yellow hair beside her white. And I do not know that there is not some place, not here, where they are still together, and he is twenty-one and she is still eighteen. I do not know this; but I know that all the pamphlets of the German doctor cannot tell me it is false.

Meantime the great Pasterzen glacier moves on, and the rocks with it; and the mountain flings his shadow of the planets in its face.

HAROLD FREDERIC
1856–1898

BROTHER SEBASTIAN'S FRIENDSHIP

I WHO tell this story am called Brother Sebastian. This name was given me more than forty years ago, while Louis Philippe was still king. My other name has been buried so long that I have nearly forgotten it. I think that my people are dead. At least I have heard nothing from them in many years. My reputation has always been that of a misanthrope—if not that, then of a dreamer. In the seminary I had no intimates. In the Order, for I am a Brother of the Christian Schools, my associates are polite—nothing more. I seem to be outside their social circles, their plans, their enjoyments. True, I am an old man now. But in other years it was the same. All my life I have been in solitude.

To this there is a single exception—one star shining in the blackness. And my career has been so bleak that, although it ended in deeper sadness than I had known before, I look back to the episode with gratitude. The bank of clouds which shut out this sole light of my life quickened its brilliancy before they submerged it.

After the terrible siege of '71, when the last German was gone, and our houses had breasted the ordeal of the Commune, I was sent to the South. The Superior thought my cheeks were ominously hollow, and suspected threats of consumption in my cough. So I was to go to the Mediterranean, and try its milder air. I liked the change. Paris, with its gloss of noisy gaiety and its substance of sceptical heartlessness, was repugnant to me. Perhaps it was because of this that Brother Sebastian had been mured up in the capital two-thirds of his life. If our surroundings are too congenial we neglect the work set before us. But no matter ; to the coast I went.

My new home was a long-established house, spacious, venerable, and dreary. It was on the outskirts of an ancient town, which was of far more importance before our Lord was born than it has ever been since. We had little to do. There were nine brothers, a handful of resident orphans, and some threescore pupils. Ragged, stupid, big-eyed urchins they were, altogether different from the keen Paris boys. For that matter, every feature of my new home was odd. The heat of the summer was scorching in its intensity. The peasants were much more respectful to our cloth, and, as to appearance, looked

like figures from Murillo's canvases. The foliage, the wine, the language, the manners of the people—everything was changed. This interested me, and my morbidness vanished. The Director was delighted with my improved condition. Poor man! he was positive that my cheeks had puffed out perceptibly after the first two months. So the winter came—a mild, wet, muggy winter, wholly unlike my favourite sharp season in the North.

We were killing time in the library one afternoon, the Director and a Swiss Brother sitting by the lamp reading, I standing at one of the tall, narrow windows, drumming on the panes and dreaming. The view was not an inspiring one. There was a long horizontal line of pale yellow sky and another of flat, black land, out of which an occasional poplar raised itself solemnly. The great mass below the stripes was brown; above, gloomy grey. Close under the window two boys were playing in the garden of the house. I recall distinctly that they threw armfuls of wet fallen leaves at each other with a great shouting. While I stood thus, the Brother Servitor, Abonus, came in and whispered to the Director. He always whispered. It was not fraternal, but I did not like this Abonus.

"Send him up here," said the Director. Then I remembered that I had heard the roll of a carriage and the bell ring a few moments before. Abonus came in again. Behind him there was some one else, whose footsteps had the hesitating sound of a stranger's. Then I heard the Director's voice:

"You are from Algiers?"—"I am, Brother."

"Your name?"

"Edouard, Brother."

"Well, tell me more."

"I was under orders to be in Paris in January, Brother. As my health was poor, I received permission to come back to France this autumn. At Marseilles I was instructed to come here. So I am here. I have these papers from the Mother house, and from Etienne, Director, of Algiers."

Something in the voice seemed peculiar to me. I turned and examined the newcomer. He stood behind and to one side of the Director, who was laboriously deciphering some papers through his big horn spectacles. The light was not very bright, but there was enough to see a wonderfully handsome face, framed in dazzling black curls. Perhaps it looked the more beautiful because contrasted with the shaven grey poll and surly features of grim Abonus. But

to me it was a dream of St. John the Evangelist. The eyes of the face were lowered upon the Director, so I could only guess their brilliancy. The features were those of an extreme youth—round, soft, and delicate. The expression was one of utter fatigue, almost pain. It bore out the statement of ill-health.

The Director had finished his reading. He lifted his head now and surveyed the stranger in turn. Finally, stretching out his fat hand, he said: "You are welcome, Brother Edouard. I see the letter says you have had no experience except with the youngest children. Brother Photius does that now. We will have you rest for a time. Then we will see about it. Meanwhile I will turn you over to the care of good Abonus, who will give you one of the north rooms."

So the two went out, Abonus shuffling his feet disagreeably. It was strange that he could do nothing to please me.

"Brother Sebastian," said the Director, as the door closed, "it is curious that they should have sent me a tenth man. Why, I lie awake now to invent pretences of work for those I have already. I will give up all show of teaching presently, and give out that I keep a hospital—a retreat for ailing brothers. Still, this Edouard is a pretty boy."

"Very."

"Etienne's letter says he is twenty and a Savoyard. He speaks like a Parisian."

"Very likely he is seminary bred," put in the Swiss.

"Whatever he is, I like his looks," said our Superior. This good man liked every one. His was the placid, easy Alsatian nature, prone to find goodness in all things—even crabbed Abonus. The Director, or, as he was known, Brother Elysee, was a stout, round little man, with a fine face and imperturbable good spirits. He was adored by all his subordinates. But I fancy he did not advance in favour at Paris very rapidly.

I liked Edouard from the first. The day after he came we were together much, and, when we parted after vespers, I was conscious of a vast respect for this newcomer. He was bright, ready-spoken, and almost a man of the world. Compared with my dull career, his short life had been one of positive gaiety. He had seen Frederic le Maitre at the Comédie Française. He had been at Court and spoken with the Prince Imperial. He was on terms of intimacy with Monsignori, and had been a protégé of the sainted Darboy. It was a rare pleasure to hear him talk of these things.

Before this, the ceaseless shifting of brothers from one house to another had been indifferent to me. For the hundreds of strangers who came and went in the Paris house on Oudinot Street I cared absolutely nothing. I did not suffer their entrance nor their exit to excite me. This was so much the case that they called me a machine. But with Edouard this was different. I grew to love the boy from the first evening, when, as he left my room, I caught myself saying, " I shall be sorry when he goes." He seemed to be fond of me, too. For that matter, most of the brothers petted him, Elysee especially. But I was flattered that he chose me as his particular friend. For the first time my heart had opened.

We were alone one evening after the holidays. It was cold without, but in my room it was warm and bright. The fire crackled merrily, and the candles gave out a mellow and pleasant light. The Director had gone up to Paris, and his mantle had fallen on me. Edouard sat with his feet stretched to the fender, his curly head buried in the great curved back of my invalid chair, the red fire-light reflected on his childish features. I took pleasure in looking at him. He looked at the coals and knit his brows as if in a puzzle. I often fancied that something weightier than the usual troubles of life weighed upon him. At last he spoke, just as I was about to question him :

" Are you afraid to die, Sebastian ? "

Not knowing what else to say, I answered, " No, my child."

" I wonder if you enjoy life in community ? "

This was still stranger. I could but reply that I had never known any other life ; that I was fitted for nothing else.

" But still," persisted he, " would you not like to leave it—to have a career of your own before you die ? Do you think this is what a man is created for—to give away his chance to live ? "

" Edouard, you are interrogating your own conscience," I answered. " These are questions which you must have answered yourself before you took your vows. When you answered them you sealed them."

Perhaps I spoke too harshly, for he coloured and drew up his feet. Such shapely little feet they were. I felt ashamed of my crustiness.

" But, Edouard," I added, " your vows are those of the novitiate. You are not yet twenty-eight. You have still the right to ask yourself these things. The world is very fair to men of your age. Do not dream that I was angry with you."

He sat gazing into the fire. His face wore a strange, far-away

expression, as he reached forth his hand, in a groping way, and rested it on my knee, clutching the gown nervously. Then he spoke slowly, seeking for words, and keeping his eyes on the flames.

" You have been good to me, Brother Sebastian. Let me ask you : May I tell you something in confidence—something which shall never pass your lips ? I mean it."

He had turned and poured those marvellous eyes into mine with irresistible magnetism. Of course I said, " Speak ! " and I said it without the slightest hesitation.

" I am not a Christian Brother. I do not belong to your Order. I have no claim upon the hospitality of this roof. I am an impostor ! "

He ejected these astounding sentences with an energy almost fierce, gripping my knee meanwhile. Then, as suddenly, his grasp relaxed, and he fell to weeping bitterly.

I stared at him solemnly, in silence. My tongue seemed paralysed. Confusing thoughts whirled in a maze unbidden through my head. I could say nothing. But a strange impulse prompted me to reach out and take his hot hand in mine. It was piteous to hear him sobbing, his head upon his raised arm, his whole frame quivering with emotion. I had never seen any one weep like that before. So I sat dumb, trying in vain to answer this bewildering self-accusation. At last there came out of the folds of the chair the words, faint and tear-choked :

" You have promised me secrecy, and you will keep your word ; but you will hate me."

" Why, no, no, Edouard, not hate you," I answered, scarcely knowing what I said. I did not comprehend it at all. There was nothing more for me to say. Finally, when some power of thought returned, I asked :

" Of all things, my poor boy, why should you choose such a dreary life as this ? What possible reason led you to enter the community ? What attractions has it for you ? "

Edouard turned again from the fire to me. His eyes sparkled. His teeth were tight set.

" Why ? Why ? I will tell you why, Brother Sebastian. Can you not understand how a poor hunted beast should rejoice to find shelter in such an out-of-the-way place, among such kind men, in the grave of this cloister life ? I have not told you half enough. Do you not know in the outside world, in Toulon, or Marseilles, or that fine Paris of yours, there is a price on my head ?—or no, not that,

but enemies that are looking for me, searching everywhere, turning every little stone for the poor privilege of making me suffer? And do you know that these enemies wear shakos, and are called gens d'armes? Would you be pleased to learn that it is a prison I escape by coming here? *Now*, will you hate me?"

The boy had risen from his chair. He spoke hurriedly, almost hysterically, his eyes snapping at mine like coals, his curls dishevelled, his fingers curved and stiffened like the talons of a hawk. I had never seen such intense earnestness in a human face. Passions like these had never penetrated the convent walls before.

While I sat dumb before him, Edouard left the room. I was conscious of his exit only in a vague way. For hours I sat in my chair beside the grate, thinking, or trying to think. You can see readily that I was more than a little perplexed. In the absence of Elysee, I was Director. The management of the house, its good fame, its discipline, all rested on my shoulders. And to be confronted by such an abyss as this! I could do absolutely nothing. The boy had tied my tongue by the pledge. Besides, had I been unsworn, I am sure the idea of exposure would never have come to me. It was late before I retired that night. And I recall with terrible distinctness the chaos of brain and faculty which ushered in a restless sleep almost as dawn was breaking.

I had fancied that Brother Edouard would find life intolerable in community after his revelation to me. He would be chary of meeting me before the brothers; would be constantly tortured by fear of detection. As I saw this prospect of the poor innocent—for it was absurd to think of him as anything else—dreading exposure at each step in his false life, shrinking from observation, biting his tongue at every word—I was greatly moved by pity. Judge my surprise, then, when I saw him the next morning join in the younger brothers' regular walk around the garden, joking and laughing as I had never seen before. On his right was thin, sickly Victor, rest his soul! and on the other pursy, thick-necked John, as merry a soul as Cork ever turned out. And how they laughed, even the frail consumptive! It was a pleasure to see his blue eyes brighten with enjoyment and his warm cheeks blush. Above John's queer, Irish chuckle, I heard Edouard's voice, with its dainty Parisian accent, retailing jokes and leading in the laughter. The tramp was stretched out longer than usual, so pleasant did they find it. At this development I was much amazed.

The same change was noticeable in all that Edouard did. Instead of the apathy with which he had discharged his nominal duties, his baby pupils (for Photius had gone to Peru) now became bewitched with him. He told them droll stories, incited their rivalry in study by instituting prizes for which they struggled monthly, and, in short, metamorphosed his department. The change spread to himself. His cheeks took on a ruddier hue, the sparkle of his black eyes mellowed into a calm and steady radiance. There was no trace of feverish elation which, in solitude, recoiled to the brink of despair. He sang to himself evenings in his dormitory, clearly and with joy. His step was as elastic as that of any schoolboy. I often thought upon this change, and meditated how beautiful an illustration of confession's blessings it furnished. Frequently we were alone, but he never referred again to that memorable evening, even by implication. At first I dreaded to have the door close upon us, feeling that he must perforce seek to take up the thread where he had broken it then. But he talked of other things, and so easily and naturally that I felt embarrassed. For weeks I could not shake off the feeling that, at our next talk, he would broach the subject. But he never did.

Elysee returned, bringing me kind words from the Mother house, and a half-jocular hint that Superior General Philippe had me much in his mind. No doubt there had been a time when the idea of becoming a Director would have stirred my pulses. Surely it was gone now. I asked for nothing but to stay beside Edouard, to watch him, and to be near to lend him a helping hand when his hour of trouble should come. From that ordeal, which I saw approaching clearly and certainly, I shrank with all my nerves on edge. As the object of my misery grew bright-eyed and strong, I felt myself declining in health. My face grew thin, and I could not eat. I saw before my eyes always this wretched boy singing upon the brow of the abyss. Sometimes I strove not to see his fall—frightful and swift. His secret seemed to harass him no longer. To me it was heavier than lead.

The evening the Brother Director returned, we sat together in the reading-room, the entire community. Elysee had been speaking of the Mother house, concerning which Brother Barnabas, an odd little Lorrainer who spoke better German than French, and who regarded Paris with the true provincial awe and veneration, exhibited much curiosity. We had a visitor, a gaunt, self-sufficient old Parisian, who had spent fourteen days in the Mazas prison during the Commune. I will call him Brother Albert, for his true name in religion is very

well known. "I heard a curious story in the Vaugirard house," said the Brother Director, refreshing himself with a pinch of snuff, "which made the more impression upon me that I once knew intimately one of the persons in it. Martin Delette was my schoolmate at Pfalsbourg in the old days. A fine, studious lad he was, too. He took orders and went to the north, where he lived for many years a quiet country curé. He had a niece, a charming girl who is not now more than twenty or one-and-twenty. She was an orphan, and lived with him, going to a convent to school and returning at vacations. She was not a bad girl, but a trifle wayward and easily led. She gave the Sisters much anxiety. Last spring she barely escaped compromising the house by an escapade with a young *misérable* of the town, named Banin."

"I know your story," said Albert, with an air which hinted that this was a sufficient reason why the rest should not hear it. "Banin is in prison."

Elysee proceeded: "The girl was reprimanded. Next week she disappeared. To one of her companions she had confided a great desire to see Paris. So good Father Delette was summoned, and, after a talk with the Superioress, started post-haste for the capital. He found no signs either of poor Renée or of Banin, who had also disappeared. The Curé was nearly heart-broken. Each day, they told me, added a year to his appearance. He did not cease to importune the police chiefs and to haunt the public places for a glimpse of his niece's face. But the summer came, and no Renée. The Curé began to cough and grow weak. But one day in August the Director, good Prosper, called him down to the reception-room to see a visitor.

"'There is news for you,' he whispered, pressing poor Martin's hand. In the room he found——"

"In the room he found——" broke in Albert, impertinently, but with a quiet tone of authority which cowed good Elysee, "a shabby man, looking like a poorly fed waiter. This person rose and said, 'I am a detective; do you know Banin—young man, tall, blond, squints, broken tooth upper jaw, hat back on his head, much talk, hails from Rheims?'

"'Ah,' said Delette, 'I have not seen him, but I know him too well.'

"The detective pointed with his thumb over his left shoulder. 'He is in jail. He is good for twenty years. I did it myself. My name is So-and-so. Good job. Procurator said you were interested —some woman in the case, parishioner of yours, eh?'

" ' My niece,' gasped the Curé.

" ' O ho ! does you credit ; pretty girl, curly head, good manners. Well, she's off. Good trick, too. She was the decoy. Banin stood in the shadow with club. She brought gentleman into alley, friend did work. That's Banin's story. Perhaps a lie. You have a brother in Algiers ? Thought so. Girl went out there once ? So I was told. Probably there now. African officers say not ; but they're a sleepy lot. If I was a criminal I'd go to Algiers. Good hiding.' The detective went. Delette stood where he was in silence. I went to him, and helped carry him upstairs. We put him in his bed. He died there."

Brother Albert stopped. He had told the story, dialogue and all, like a machine. We did not doubt its correctness. The memory of Albert had passed into a proverb years before.

Brother Albert raised his eyes again, and added, as if he had not paused, " He was ashamed to hold his head up. He might well be."

A strange, excited voice rose from the other end of the room. I looked and saw that it was Edouard who spoke. He had half arisen from his chair and scowled at Albert, throwing out his words with the tremulous haste of a young man first addressing an audience :

" Why should he be ashamed ? Was he not a good man ? Was the blame of his bad niece's acts his ? From the story, she was well used and had no excuse. It is he who is to be pitied, not blamed ! "

The Brother Director smiled benignly at the young enthusiast. " Brother Edouard is right," he said. " Poor Martin was to be compassioned. None the less, my heart is touched for the girl. In Banin's trial it appeared that he maltreated her, and forced her to do what she did by blows. They were really married. Her neighbours gave Renée a name for gentleness and a good heart. Poor thing ! "

" And she never was found ? " asked Abonus, eagerly. He spoke very rarely. He looked now at me as he spoke, and there was a strange, ungodly glitter in his eyes which made me shudder involuntarily.

" Never," replied the Director, " although there is a reward, 5000 francs, offered for her recovery. Miserable child, who can tell what depths of suffering she may be in this moment ? "

" It would be remarkable if she should be found now, after all this time," said Abonus, sharply. His wicked, squinting old eyes were still fastened upon me. This time, as by a flash of eternal knowledge, I read their meaning, and felt the ground slipping from under me.

I shall never forget the night that followed. I made no pretence

of going to bed. Edouard's little dormitory was in another part of the house. I went once to see him, but dared not knock, since Abonus was stirring about just across the hall, in his own den. I scratched on a piece of paper " Fly ! " in the dark, and pushed it under the door. Then I returned to walk my chamber, chafing like a wild beast. Ah, that night, that night !

With the first cock-crow in the village below, long before the bell, I left my room. I wanted air to breathe. I passed Abonus on the broad stairway. He strode up with unwonted vigour, bearing a heavy cauldron of water as if it had been straw. His gown was tumbled and dusty ; his greasy *rabat* hung awry about his neck. I had it in my head to speak with him, but could not. So the early hours, with devotions which I went through in a dream, wore on in horrible suspense, and breakfast came.

We sat at the long table, five on a side, the Director—looking red-eyed and weary from the evening's unaccustomed dissipation—sitting at the head. Below us stood Brother Albert, reading from Tertullian in a dry, monotonous chant. I recall, as I write, how I found a certain comfort in those splendid, sonorous Latin sentences, though I was conscious of not comprehending a word. I dreaded the moment they should end. Edouard sat beside me. We had not exchanged a word during the morning. How could I speak ? What should I say ? I was in a nervous flutter, like unto those who watch the final pinioning of a criminal whose guillotine is awaiting him. I could not keep my eyes from the fair face beside me, with its delicately cut profile, made all the more cameo-like by its pallid whiteness. The lips were tightly compressed. I could see askant that the tiny nostrils were quivering with excitement. All else was impassive on Edouard's face. We two sat waiting for the axe to fall.

It is as distinct as a nightmare to me. Abonus came in with his great server laden with victuals. He stumbled as he approached. He too was excited. He drew near, and stood behind me. I seemed to feel his breath penetrate my skull ; and yet I was forced to answer a whispered question of Brother John's with a smooth face. I saw Edouard suddenly reach for the milk glass in front of his plate, and hand it back to Abonus with the disdain of a duchess. He said, in a sharp, peremptory tone :

" Take it away and cleanse it. No one but a dirty monk would place such a glass on the table."

Albert ceased his reading. Abonus did not touch the glass. He

shuffled hastily to the sideboard and deposited his burden. Then he came back with the same eager movement. He placed his fists on his hips, like a fish-woman, and hissed, in a voice choking with concentrated rage :

" No one but a woman would complain of it ! "

The brothers stared at each other and the two speakers in mute surprise. But they saw nothing in the words beyond a personal wrangle—though even that was such a novelty as to arrest instant attention. I busied myself with my plate. The Director assumed his harshest tone, and asked the cause of the altercation. Abonus leaned over and whispered something in his ear. I remember next a room full of confusion, a babel of conflicting voices, and a whirling glimpse of uniforms. Then I fainted.

When I revived I was in my own room, stretched upon my pallet. I looked around in a dazed way and saw the Brother Director and a young gendarme by the closed door. Something black and irregular in the outline of the bed at my side attracted my eyes. I saw that it was Edouard's head buried in the drapery. As in a dream I laid my numb hand upon those crisp curls. I was an old man, she was a weak, wretched girl. She raised her face at my touch, and burned in my brain a vision of stricken agony, of horrible soul-pain, which we liken, for want of a better simile, to the anguish in the eyes of a dying doe. Her lips moved ; she said something, I know not what. Then she went, and I was left alone with Elysee. His words—broken, stumbling words—I remember :

" She asked to see you, Sebastian, my friend. I could not refuse. Her papers were forged. She did come from Algiers, where her uncle is a Capuchin. I do not ask, I do not wish to know, how much you know of this. Before my Redeemer, I feel nothing but pity for the poor lamb. Lie still, my friend ; try to sleep. We are both older men than we were yesterday."

There is little else to tell. Only twice have reflections of this episode in my old life reached me in the seclusion of a missionary post at the foot of the Andes. I learned a few weeks ago that the wretched Abonus had bought a sailor's café on the Toulon wharves with his five thousand francs. And I know also that the heart of the Marshal-President was touched by the sad story of Renée, and that she left the prison La Salpêtrière to lay herself in penitence at the foot of Mother Church. This is the story of my friendship.

GERTRUDE ATHERTON
B. 1857

THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER

MORTON BLAINE returned to New York from his brief vacation to find awaiting him a frantic note from John Schuyler, the man nearer to him than any save himself, imploring him to " come at once."

The note was twenty-four hours old. Blaine, without changing his travelling clothes, rang for a cab and was driven rapidly up the Avenue. He was a man of science, not of enthusiasms, cold, unerring, brilliant ; a superb intellectual machine, unremittingly polished, and enlarged with every improvement. But for one man he cherished an abiding sympathy ; to that man he hastened on the slightest summons, as he hastened now.

As the cab rolled over the asphalt of the Avenue, Blaine glanced idly at the stream of carriages returning from the Park, lifting his hat to many of the languid pretty women. He owed his minor fame to his guardianship of fashionable nerves. He could calm hysteria with a pressure of his cool, flexible hand or a sudden modulation of his harsh voice. And women dreaded his wrath. There were those who averred that his eyes could smoke.

He leaned forward and raised his hat with sudden interest. She who returned his bow was as cold in her colouring as a winter night, but possessed a strength of line and depth of eye which suggested to the analyst her power to give the world a shock did Circumstance cease to run abreast of her. She was leaning back indolently in the open carriage, the sun slanting into her luminous skin and eyes. As her eyes met those of the doctor her mouth convulsed suddenly, and a glance of mutual understanding passed between them. Then she raised her head with a defiant, almost reckless movement.

Blaine reached his friend's house in a moment. The man who had summoned him was walking aimlessly up and down his library. He was unshaven ; his hair and his clothing were disordered. His face

had the modern beauty of strength and intellect and passion and weakness. A flash of relief illuminated it as Blaine entered.

"She has been terrible!" he said. "Terrible! I have not had the courage to call in any one else, and I am worn out. She is asleep, and I got out of the room for half an hour. The nurse is exhausted. Do stay to-night."

"I will stay. Let us go up-stairs."

As they reached the second landing two handsome children romped across the hall and flung themselves upon their father.

"Where have you been?" they demand. "Why do you shut yourself up on the third floor with mamma all the time? When will she get well?"

Schuyler kissed them and bade them return to the nursery.

"How long can I keep it from them?" he asked bitterly. "What an atmosphere for children—my children!—to grow up in!"

"If you would do as I wish, and send her where she belongs——"

"No. She is my wife. Moreover, concealment then would be impossible."

They had reached the third floor. He inserted a key in a door, hesitated a moment, then said abruptly: "I saw in a paper that *she* had returned. Can it be possible?"

"I saw her on the Avenue a few moments ago."

Was it the doctor's imagination, or did the goaded man at his side flash him a glance of appeal?

They entered a room whose doors and windows were muffled. The furniture was solid, too solid to be moved except by muscular arms.

On the bed lay a woman with ragged hair and sunken yellow face, but even in her ruin indefinably elegant. Her parted lips were black and blistered within; her shapely, skinny hands clutched the quilt with the tenacious suggestion of the eagle—that long-lived defiant bird. At the bedside sat a vigorous woman, the pallor of fatigue on her face.

"Give me a drink," she said feverishly. "Water! water! water!" She panted, and her tongue protruded slightly. Her husband turned away, his shoulders twitching. The nurse held a silver goblet to the woman's lips. She drank greedily, then scowled up at the doctor.

"You missed it," she said. "I should be glad, for I hate you,

only you give me more relief than they. They are afraid. They tried to fool me, the idiots! But they didn't try it twice. I bit."

She laughed and threw her arms above her head. The loose sleeves of her gown fell back, disclosing arms speckled as from an explosion of gunpowder.

"Just an ordinary morphine fiend," thought the doctor. "And she is the wife of John Schuyler!"

An hour after dinner he told the husband and nurse to go to bed. For a while he read, the woman sleeping profoundly. The house was absolutely still. Had pandemonium reigned he could hardly have heard of it from this isolated room. Despite the stillness, the doctor had to strain his ear to catch the irregular breathing of the sick woman. He had a singular feeling, although the most unimaginative of men, that this third floor, containing only himself and the woman, had been sliced from the rest of the house and hung suspended in space, independent of natural laws. Then the idea shaped itself, born of another, as yet unacknowledged, skulking in the recesses of his brain. Going to the bed, he looked down upon the woman, coldly, reflectively —exactly as he had often watched the quivering of an animal— dissected alive.

Studying this man's face, it was impossible to imagine it agitated by any passion except thirst for knowledge. The skin was as white as marble; the profile was straight and mathematical, the mouth a straight line, the chin as square as that of a chiselled Fate. The jaw was prominent, powerful, relentless. The eyes were deeply set and grey as polished steel. The large brow was luminous, very full—an index to the terrible intellect of the man.

As he looked down on the woman his nostrils twitched, and his lips compressed firmly. Then he smiled. It was an odd, almost demoniacal smile.

"A physician," he said half aloud, "has almost as much power as God. The idea strikes me that we are the personification of that useful symbol."

He plunged his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the room.

"These are the facts in the case," he continued. "The one man I love and unequivocally respect is tied, hand and foot, to that unsexed dehumanised morphine receptacle on the bed. She is hopeless. Every known specific has failed, *must* fail, for she loves the vice. He has

one of the best brains of this day prolific in brains; a distressing capacity for affection, human to the core. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his mental powers, he carries with him a constant sickening sense of humiliation; a proud man, he lives in daily fear of exposure and shame. At the age of forty-two, in the maturity of his manhood, he meets the woman who conquers his heart, his imagination, by making other women abhorrent to him, who allures and maddens with the certainty of her power to make good his ideal of her. He cannot marry her; that animal on the bed is capable of living for twenty years.

"So much for him. A girl of twenty-eight, whose wealth and brain and beauty, and that other something that has not yet been analysed and labelled, have made her a social star; who has come to wonder, then to resent, then to yawn at the general vanity of life, is suddenly swept out of her calm orbit by a man's passion; and, with the swiftness of decision natural to her, goes to Europe. She returns in less than three months. For these two people there is but one sequel. The second chapter will be written the first time they are alone. They will go to Europe. What will be the rest of the book?

"First, there will be an ugly and reverberating scandal. In the course of a year or two she will compel him to return in the interest of his career. She will not be able to remain; so proud a woman could not stand the position. Again he will go with her. In a word, my friend's career will be ruined.

"So much for them. Consider the other victims—the children. A morphine-mother in an asylum, a father in a strange land with a woman who is not his wife, the world cognisant of the facts of the case. They grow up at odds with society. Result, they are morbid, warped, unmoral. In trite old English, their lives are ruined, as are all lives that have not had a fair chance."

He returned to the bedside. He laid his finger on the woman's pulse.

"No morphine to-night and she dies. A worthless wretch is sent where she belongs. Four people are saved."

His breast swelled. His grey eyes seemed literally to send forth smoke; they suggested some noiseless deadly weapon of war. He exclaimed aloud: "My God! what a power to lie in the hands of one man! I stand here the arbiter of five destinies. It is for *me* to say whether four people shall be happy or wretched, saved or ruined. I

might say, with Nero, 'I am God!'" He laughed. "I am famed for my power to save where others have failed. I am famed in the comic weeklies for having ruined the business of more undertakers than any physician of my day. That has been my rôle, my professional pride. I have never felt so proud as now."

The woman, who had been moving restlessly for some time, twitched suddenly and uncontrollably. She opened her eyes.

"Give it to me—quick!" she demanded. Her voice, always querulous, was raucous; her eyes were wild.

"No," he said deliberately, "you will have no more morphine."

She stared at him incredulously, then laughed.

"Stop joking," she said roughly. "Give it to me—quick. I am very weak."

"No," he said.

Then her eyes expanded with terror. She raised herself on one arm.

"You mean that?" she asked.

"Yes."

He watched her critically. She would be interesting.

"You are going to cure me with drastic measures; others have failed."

"Possibly."

Her face contracted with hatred. She had been a rather clever woman, and she believed that he was going to experiment with her. But she had also been a strong-willed woman and used to command since babyhood.

"Give me that morphine," she said imperiously. "If you don't I'll be dead before morning."

He stood imperturbable. She sprang from the bed and flung herself upon him, strong with anger and apprehension.

"Give it to me!" she screamed. "Give it to me." She strove to bite him.

He caught her by the shoulder and held her at arm's length. She writhed and struggled and cursed. Her oaths might have been learned in the gutter. She kicked at him and strove to reach him with her nails, clawing the air.

"What an exquisite bride she was!" he thought. "And what columns of rubbish have been printed about her and her entertainments!"

The woman was shrieking and struggling.

"Give it to me! You brute! You fiend! I always hated you! Give it to me! I am dying! Help! Help!" But the walls were padded.

He permitted her to fling herself upon him, easily brushing aside her jumping fingers and snapping teeth. He knew that her agony was frightful. Her body was a net-work of hungry nerves. The diseased pulp of her brain had ejected every thought but one. She squirmed like an old autumn leaf about to fall. Her ugly face became tragic. The words shot from her dry, contracted throat: "Give me the morphine! Give me the morphine!"

Suddenly realising the immutability of the man in whose power she was, she sprang from him and ran frantically about the room, uttering harsh, bleat-like cries. She pulled open the drawers of a chest, rummaging among its harmless contents, gasping, quivering, bounding, as her tortured nerves commanded. When she had littered the floor with the contents of the chest she ran about screaming hopelessly. The doctor shuddered, but he thought of the four innocent people in her power and in his.

She fell on the floor, biting the carpet, striking out her arms, tearing her nightgown into strips; then lay quivering, a hideous, speckled, uncanny thing, who should have been embalmed and placed beside the Venus of Milo.

She raised herself on her hands and crawled along the carpet, casually at first, as a man stricken in the desert may, half-consciously, continue his search for water. Then the doctor, intently watching her, saw an expression of hope leap into her bulging eyes. She scrambled past him towards the wash-stand. Before he could define her purpose, she had leaped upon a goblet inadvertently left there and had broken it on the marble. He reached her just in time to save her throat.

Then she looked up at him pitifully. "Give it to me!"

She pressed his knees to her breast. The red, burned-out, tear-ducts yawned. The tortured body stiffened and relaxed.

"Poor wretch!" he thought. "But what is the physical agony of a night to the mental anguish of a lifetime?"

"Once! once!" she gasped, "or kill me. Kill me! Kill me!"

He picked her up, put a fresh nightgown on her, and laid her on the bed. She remained as he placed her, her eyes staring at the ceiling.

He returned to his chair and looked at his watch. "She may live

two hours," he thought. "Possibly three. It is twelve. There is plenty of time."

The room grew as still as the mountain-top whence he had that day returned. He attempted to read, but could not. The sense of supreme power filled his brain. He was the gigantic factor in the fates of four.

Then Circumstance, the outwardly wayward, the ruthlessly sequential, played him an ugly trick. His eyes, glancing idly about the room, were arrested by the big old-fashioned rocking-chair. There was something familiar about it. Soon he remembered that it resembled one in which his mother used to sit. She had been an invalid, and the most sinless and unworldly woman he had ever known. He recalled, with a touch of the old impatience, how she had irritated his active, aspiring, essentially modern mind with her cast-iron precepts of right and wrong. Her conscience flagellated her, and she had striven to develop her son's to the goodly proportion of her own. As he was naturally a truthful and upright boy, he resented her homilies mightily. "Conscience," he once broke out impatiently, "has made more women bores, more men failures, than any ten vices in the rogues' calendar."

She had looked in pale horror, and taken refuge in an axiom: "Conscience makes cowards of us all."

He moved his head with involuntary pride. The greatest achievement of civilisation was the triumph of the intellect over inherited impressions. Every normal man was conscientious by instinct, however he might outrage the sturdy little judge clinging tenaciously to his bench in the victim's brain. It was only when the brain grew big with knowledge and the will clasped it with fingers of steel that the little judge was throttled, then cast out.

Conscience. What was it like? The doctor had forgotten. He had never committed a murder nor a dishonourable act. Had the impulse of either been in him, his cleverness would have put it aside with a smile of scorn. He had never scrupled to thrust from his path whoever or whatever stood in his way, and had stridden on without a backward glance. His profession had involved many experiments that would have made quick havoc of even the ordinary man's conscience.

Conscience. An awkward guest for an unsuspected murderer; for the groundling whose heredity had not been conquered by brain. Fancy being pursued by the spectre of the victim!

The woman on the bed gave a start and groan that recalled him to the case in hand. He rose and walked quickly to her side. Her eyes were closed, her face was black with congested blood. He laid his finger on her pulse.

" It will not be long now," he thought.

He went toward his chair. He felt a sudden distaste for it, a desire for motion. He walked up and down the room rather more rapidly than before.

" If I were an ordinary man," he thought, " I suppose that tortured creature on the bed would haunt me to my death. Rot ! A murderer I should be called if the facts were known, I suppose. Well, she is worse. Did I permit her to live she would make the living hell of four people."

The woman gave a sudden awful cry, the cry of a lost soul shot into the night of eternity. The stillness had been so absolute, the cry broke that stillness so abruptly and so horridly, that the doctor, strong-brained, strong-nerved as he was, gave a violent start, and the sweat started from his body.

" I am a fool," he exclaimed angrily, welcoming the sound of his voice ; " but I wish to God it were day and there were noises outside."

He strode hurriedly up and down the room, casting furtive glances at the bed. The night was quiet again, but still that cry rang through it. He recalled the theory that sound never dies. The waves of space had yielded this to him.

" Good God ! " he thought. " Am I going to pieces. If I let this wretch, this criminal die, I save four people. If I let her live, I ruin their lives. The life of a man of brain and pride and heart ; the life of a woman of beauty and intellect and honour ; the lives of two children of unknown potentialities, for whom the world has now a warm heart. ' The greatest good of the greatest number '—the principle that governs civil law. Has not even the worthy individual been sacrificed to it again and again ? Does it not hang the criminal dangerous to the community ? And is that called murder ? What am I at this moment but law epitomised ? Shall I hesitate ? My God, am I hesitating ? Conscience—is it that ? A superfluous instinct transmitted by my ancestors and coddled by a woman—is it that which has sprung from its grave, rattling its bones ? ' *Conscience makes* '—oh, shame that I should succumb when so much is at stake—that I should hesitate when the welfare of four human beings trembles

in the balance! '*Conscience*'—that in the moment of my supreme power I should falter!"

He returned to the woman. He reached his finger toward her pulse, then hurriedly withdrew it and resumed his restless march.

"This is only a nightmare, born of the night and the horrible stillness. To-morrow in the world of men it will be forgotten, and I shall rejoice. . . . But there will be recurring hours of stillness, of solitude. Will this night repeat itself? Will that thing on the bed haunt me? Will that cry shriek in my ears? Oh, shame on my selfishness! What am I thinking of? To let that base, degraded wretch exist, that I may live peaceably with my conscience? To let four others go to their ruin, that I may escape a few hours of torment? That I—*I*—should come to this! 'The greatest good of the greatest number. The greatest' . . . 'Conscience makes cowards of us all'!"

To his unutterable self-contempt and terror, he found his will for once powerless to control the work of the generations that had preceded him. His iron jaw worked spasmodically, his grey eyes looked frozen. The marble pallor of his face was suffused with a tingle of green.

"I despise myself!" he exclaimed, with fierce emphasis. "I loathe myself! I will not yield! '*Conscience*'—they shall be saved, and by me. '*The greatest*'—I will maintain my intellectual supremacy—that, if nothing else. She shall die!"

He halted. Perhaps she was already dead. He could reach the door in a bound and run downstairs and out of the house. To be followed . . .

He ran to the bed. The woman still breathed faintly; her mouth was twisted into a sardonic and pertinent expression. His hand sought his pocket and brought forth a case. He opened it and stared at the hypodermic syringe. His trembling fingers closed about it and moved toward the woman. Then, with an effort so violent he fancied he could hear his tense muscles creak, he straightened himself and turned his back upon the bed. At the same moment he dropped the instrument to the floor and set his heel upon it.

EDGAR SALTUS
B. 1858

A MAID OF MODERN ATHENS

"IT was this way," she said, and as she spoke she stooped and flicked a speck of dust from her habit. "It was this way: The existence which I lead in the minds of other people is absolutely of no importance whatever. Now wait: I care a great deal whether school keeps or not, but in caring I try chiefly to be true to myself. I may stumble; I may not. In any event I seek the best. As for the scandal of which you speak, that is nonsense. There is no criterion. That which is permissible here is inhibited yonder, and what is permissible yonder is inhibited here. Scandal, indeed!"

There was something about her that stirred the pulse. She was fair; the sort of girl whose photograph is an abomination, and yet in whose face and being a charm resides, a charm intangible and coercive, inciting to better things. A Joan of Arc in a tailor-made gown.

"You remember how it was when we were younger—— You—well, there is no use in going into that. You had a mother to think for you; I had no one. I had to solve problems unassisted. The weightiest of all was marriage, and that, in my quality of heiress, I found perplexing to a degree. But how is it possible, I asked myself, how can a girl pledge her life to a man of whom she knows absolutely nothing? For, practically speaking, what does the average girl know of the man whose name she takes? It may be different in the country; but in town! Listen to me: a girl 'comes out,' as the saying is; she meets a number of men, the majority of whom are more or less agreeable and well-bred—when she is present. But what are they when she is not? At dinners and routs, or when she receives them in her own house, they are at their best; if they are not they stay away. It is not so difficult to be agreeable once in a while, but to be so always is a question not of mask but of nature. It seems to me that when an intelligent woman admires her brother it is because that brother is really an admirable man. Has she not every opportunity of judging? But what opportunity is given to the girl whom

a man happens to take in and out at dinner, or whom she sees for an hour or two now and then? You must admit that her facilities are slight. That was the way it was with me, and that was the way I fancied it would continue to be, and I determined that it was better to remain spinster for ever than to take a man on trust and find that trust misplaced. Suspicious? No, I am not suspicious. When your husband bought this property did you think him suspicious because he had the title searched? Very good; then perhaps you will tell me that the marriage contract is less important than the conveyance of real estate? Besides, my doubts on the subject of love would have defied a catalogue. When I read of the follies and transports of which it was reported to be the prime factor, I was puzzled. It seemed to me that I had either a fibre more or a fibre less than other girls, I could not comprehend. No man I had ever met—and certainly I had met many—had ever caused me so much as a fleeting emotion. There were men with whom I found speech agreeable and argument a pleasure, but, had they worn frocks instead of trousers, such enjoyment as I experienced would have been unimpaired. You see, it was purely mental. And when—there, I remember one man in particular. As Stella said of Swift, he could talk beautifully about a broomstick. He knew the reason of things; he was up in cuneiform inscriptions and at home with meteorites; he was not prosy, and, what is more to the point, he never treated a subject as though it were a matter of life and death. He was not bad-looking, either, and he was the only man of my acquaintance who both understood Kant and got his coats from Poole. That man I liked very much. He was better than a book. I could ask him questions, a thing you can't do even of an encyclopædia. One fine day the personal pronoun cropped out. We had been discussing Herbert Spencer's theory of conceivability, and abruptly, with an inappositeness which, now I think of it, would have been admirable on the stage, but which in the drawing-room was certainly misplaced, he asked me to take a walk with him down the aisle of the swellest church in the commonwealth. I mourned his loss, as we say. But wasn't it stupid of him? But what does get into men? Why should they think that, because a girl is liberal with odd evenings, she is pining for the marriage covenant?"

With the whip she held she gave the hem of her habit a sudden lash.

"That episode gave me food for thought. H'm. By and by the scene was occupied by a young man who was an authority on orchids, and wrote sonnets for the *Interstate*. My dear, a more guileful little wretch never breathed. When my previous young man disappeared, I felt that I had been hasty. I desired nothing so much as an increase in my store of knowledge, and I determined that if another opportunity occurred I would not be in such a hurry to shut the door on entertaining developments. Consequently, when my poet turned up I was as demure as you please. He was a fox, that man. He began with the fixed purpose of irritating me into liking him. The tactics he displayed were unique. He never came when I expected him, and when he did come he was careful to go just when he thought he had scored a point. If any other man happened in, he first eclipsed him and then left him to me. I saw through that game at once. He understood perfectly that if I preferred the other man I was all the more obliged to him for going, and if I preferred him to the other man I was the sorrier to see him leave. In addition to this, whatever subject I broached, he led it by tangential flights to Love. That Machiavelli *en herbe* knew that to talk love is to make love. And talk of love he did, but in the most impersonal manner. To hear him descant you would have thought his wings were sprouting. Love, as he expressed it, was a sentiment which ennobled every other; a purifying and exalting light. It was the most gracious of despots. It banished the material; it beckoned to the ideal. It turned satiety into a vagabond that had not where to lay its head. It was the reduction of the world, creation, and all the universe to a single being. It was an enchanted upland, inhibited to the herd. It was a chimera to the vulgar, a crown to the refined. 'A perfect lover,' he said, 'must needs be an aristocrat.' And if you will believe me, I actually thought he meant what he said. In spite of myself, I was becoming interested. There were new horizons before me. I seemed to discern something hitherto unseen. My dear, for the moment I felt myself going. I was at the foot of his enchanted upland. I was almost willing to take him for guide. At first I had been merely amused. Once, even, when he quoted the 'Two souls with but a single thought,' I suggested that that must mean but half a thought apiece. The quiet dignity which he then displayed almost fetched me. He had the air of a prelate in whose presence an oaf has trampled on a crucifix. He kept up that sort of thing for two months. To me his sincerity

was beyond peradventure. Not once did he speak in a personal way. I was beginning to wonder when he would stop beating about the bush ; and I not only wondered, I believe I even wished that he would be a little more enterprising and a trifle less immaterial. Presently I detected a symptom or two which told me that the end of the beginning was in sight. I suppose my manner was more encouraging. In any event, one evening he took my hand and kissed it. From nine-and-ninety men out of a hundred I should have thought nothing of such a thing. In Europe it is an empty homage, a pantomime expressive of thanks. As I say, then, in any other man I should not have given it a second thought, but he had never done it before.

" The next day I lunched with Mrs. Bunker Hill. I mentioned his name ; I suppose it was running in my mind. And then, my dear, Fanny began. Well, the things she told me about that transcendental young man were of such a nature that when he next called I was not at home. He came again, of course. And again. He sent me a note, which I returned unopened. That, I confess, was a foolish thing to do. It showed him that I was annoyed. I might better have left it unanswered. After all, there is nothing so impenetrable as silence. Finally, he got one of his friends to come and reconnoitre. Indeed, he did not desist until I had an opportunity of cutting him dead. I was angry, I admit it. And it was after that little experience that I determined, the next time I felt myself going, I would make sure beforehand where I was going to. H'm. I wonder what his sister thought of him. You see, it was not that I had fallen in love ; the word was as unintelligible to me as before, but I had fancied that, through him, I might intercept some inkling of its meaning, and I was put out at having been tricked. *Ach ! diese Männer !* "

Beneath descending night the sky was gold-barred and green. In the east the moon glittered like a sickle of tin. The air was warm and freighted with the odours of August. You could hear the crickets hum, and here and there was the spark of a fire-fly gyrating in loops of flame. From across the meadows came the slumbrous tinkle of a bell.

She raised a gloved hand to her brow and looked down at the yellow road. To one who loved her, the Helen for whom the war of the world was fought was not so fair as she. And presently the hand moved about the brow, and, resting a second's space on the coil just above the neck, fell again to her side.

" Well," she continued, " you can see how it was. Even before the illusion, disillusionment had come. That winter I went with the Bunker Hills to Monaco. Were it not for the riff-raff, that place would be a paradise in duodecimo. We had a villa, of course. One evening, shortly after our arrival, we went to the Casino. For the fun of the thing I put some money on the *Trente et Quarante*. I did nothing but win. It was tiresome; I would rather have lost. I had to speak to the dealer, and that, as you can fancy, was not to my liking. There was a great crowd. One little old woman put money wherever I did. She won a lot, too. But one man, whom I could not help noticing, backed red when I was on black, and vice versa. He did it persistently, intentionally, and he lost every time. Finally one of the croupiers told me that my stake was above the maximum, and asked how much I would risk. I was tired of answering his questions, and I turned away. A lackey followed me with a salver covered with gold and notes—the money I had won. I didn't want it; I had not even a pocket to put it in, and the purse which I held in my hand would not have held a fraction of it. It was a nuisance. I turned it over to Bunker, and presently we all went out on the terrace that overhangs the sea. It was a perfect night. In the air was a caress, and from the Mediterranean came a tonic. While I was enjoying it all, a beggar ambled up on a crutch and begged a franc. I took from Bunker the money I had won and gave him thirty thousand. You should have heard Bunker then. I actually believe that if I had been his wife instead of his guest he would have struck me. I suppose it was an absurd thing to do. But the next time you are in search of a new sensation, do something of the same sort. The beggar became transfigured. He looked at the gold and notes, and then at me. I do not think I shall ever forget the expression in his face. Did you ever see a child asleep—a child to whom some wonderful dream has come? It was at once infantile and radiant. And all the while Bunker was abusing me like a pickpocket. The beggar gave me one look, dropped on his knees, caught the hem of my skirt, kissed it, threw away his crutch, and *ran*. I burst out laughing, and Bunker, in spite of his rage, burst out laughing too. Fanny called us a pair of idiots, and said that if I was as lavish as that it would be better and wiser, and far more Christian, to keep my money for indigent and deserving Bostonese than to bestow it as a premium on Monacan vice and effrontery. Just as she was working herself

into big words and short sentences, the man whom I had noticed at the tables came along. He had met her before, and now, as he expressed it, he precipitated himself to renew the expression of his homage. Fanny, after introducing him to me, began at once on the tale of my misconduct. He had a complexion of the cream-tint order, and a moustache blacker than hate. He was a Florentine, I discovered, a marquis with a name made up of v's, sonorous o's, and n's. We had found a table, and Bunker ordered some ices. The night was really so perfect, and the ice so good, that, like Mme. de Staël over her sherbet in moonlit Venice, I almost wished it were a sin to sit there. The marquis was in very good form and inclined to do the devoted on the slightest provocation.

"'Is mademoiselle,' he asked me, 'is mademoiselle as disdainful of the heart as she is of gold?'

"'Absolutely,' I answered—a remark which may have sounded snobbish, but still was wholly true.

"'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'there are birds that do not sing untaught.'

"'You are beginning well,' I thought.

"The next day he lunched with us, and came again in the evening. In addition to his marquisate, he had a fluty tenorino voice; what they call a *voix de salon*. He sang all sorts of things for us, and he sang them very well. When the air was lively he looked at Fanny, when it was sentimental he looked at me. Thereafter I saw a great deal of him. One day we would make up a party for Nice, on another we would go to San Remo, or else back in the mountains, or to Grasse. Of course, as you know, customs over there are such that he had no opportunity of being alone with me, even for a second; but he had an art of making love in public which must have been the result of long practice. It was both open and discreet. It was not in words; it was in the inflection of the voice and in the paying of the thousand and one little attentions which foreigners perform so well. Now, to me, a tiara might be becoming, but it is an ornament for which I have never felt the vaguest covetousness. Moreover, I had no intention of marrying an Italian, however fabulous the ancestry of that Italian might be. And, besides, the attentions of which I was the apparent object were, I knew, addressed less to me than to the blue eyes of my cheque-book. The Florentine nobleman who is disposed to marry a dowerless American is yet to be heard from. This by the way. However, I accepted the attentions with becoming grace, and marked

the cunning of his tricks. One evening he did not put in an appearance, but at midnight, I heard, on the road before my window, the tinkle of a guitar. I did not need to peer through the curtains to know from whom it came. First he sang a song of Tosti's, and then the serenade from ' Don Pasquale ' :

Com' è gentil, la notte in mezz' Aprile.

. . . . . .

Poi quando sarò morto, tu piangerai,
Ma ritornarmi in vita, tu non potrai.

Sentimental ? Yes, sentimental to the last degree. But on the Riviera, in spring, and at night, one's fancy turns to that sort of thing with astounding ease. I listened with unalloyed pleasure. It was like a Boccaccian echo. And as I listened I wondered whether I should ever learn what love might be. The idea of taking a course of lessons from a man who strummed on a guitar in front of my window never entered my head. The next day Fanny came to me in a state of great excitement. The guitarist, it appeared, had, with all proper and due formality, asked leave to place his coronet at my feet. *Ce que j'ai ri !*

" You can hear Fanny from here. She accused me of flirting with the man. ' You have no right,' she said, ' to treat him as though he were a college boy at Mt. Desert.' What he had done to make her so vicious I never discovered. It must have been the title ; a title always went to her head. Poor Fanny ! That evening, when he came, she declined to be present. I had to see him alone. My dear, he was too funny. He had prepared a little speech which he got off very well, only at the end of it he lapsed into English. ' We will loaf,' he said, ' we will be always loafers.' He meant, of course, to assert that we should love and be always lovers, but the intricacies of our pronunciation were too much for him. I could have died, it was so amusing. I managed, however, to keep a straight face. ' Marquis,' I said, ' I am deeply honoured, but your invitation is one that I am unable to accept.' A more astounded man you never saw. He really thought that he had but to ask, and it would be given. He declined to take No for an answer. He said he would wait. Actually, he was so pertinacious that I had to drag Fanny up to Paris. He followed us in the next train. There was no getting rid of him at all. If he sent me one note he sent me a hundred, and notes ten pages each, at the very least. Finally, as you heard, he tried the

dramatic. One afternoon, while I was out shopping, he bribed a waiter at the hotel where we lodged. When I returned, there he was, waiting for me. 'At last,' he cried, 'at last we are face to face. You think I do not love. Cruel one, behold me! I love as no mortal ever loved before. See, I die at your feet!' And there, before my very eyes, he whipped out a pistol, pulled the trigger, tumbled over, and seemed fully disposed to carry out the programme to the end. He had shot himself; there was no doubt about that; but he had shot himself in such an intelligent manner that, though there was blood enough to frighten a sensitive young person out of her wits, yet of danger there was none at all. Talk to me about comedians! . . .

"It was after that episode that I returned to Beacon Street. It was there that what you are pleased to call the scandal began. Fanny, whose desire to marry me off was simply epic, one day caught an Englishman; young, so she said, and good-looking. And that Englishman, she made up her mind, I should ensnare. Fanny, as you know, was possessed with an ungratified desire to pay annual visits to swell country houses on the other side. Hence, I suppose, her efforts. Having caught the Englishman, the next step was to serve him up in becoming form. To that end she gave a tentative dinner. I got to it late; in fact, I was the last to arrive. Fanny, I could see, was in a state of feverish excitement. She presented to me one or two men, whose names I did not catch, and a moment later one of them gave me his arm. When we were seated at table, and while he was sticking a chrysanthemum in his button-hole, I glanced at the card on his plate. It bore for legend Lord Alfred Harrow. It was then I took my first look at him. My dear, he was the ugliest man I have ever seen; he was so ugly that he was positively attractive. His mouth was large enough to sing a duet, but his teeth were whiter than mine."

As she spoke she curled her lips.

"There was no hair on his face, and his features were those of a middle-aged wizard. But about him was the atmosphere of health, of strength, too, and his hands, though bronzed and sinewy, were perfect. I knew he was a thoroughbred at once. 'And how do you like the States?' I asked. He was squeezing some lemon on an oyster, and I noticed that when some white wine was offered him he turned the glass upside down. 'Very much,' he answered; 'and you?' There was more of that sort of thing, and finally I asked him

if, like other Englishmen, he thought that Boston suggested one of his provincial towns. 'There seems to be some mistake,' he said. 'I was going into the Somerset five minutes ago when Hill corralled me. He told me that his wife was giving a dinner, and that at the last moment one of the bidden had wired to the effect that he was prevented from coming. Whereupon Mrs. Hill had packed him off to the club, with instructions to bring back the first man he met. I happened to be that man.' He took up the card. 'Lord Alfred is, I fancy, the delinquent. My name,' he added, 'is Mr. Stitt—Ferris Stitt,' he continued, as though apologising for its inconsequence.

"After that we got on famously. In a day or two he came to the house. When he left the world was larger. He knew nothing about poetry. He had never so much as heard of Fichte. Herbert Spencer was to him a name and nothing more. The only works of ornamental literature which he seemed to have read were the Arabian Nights, which he had forgotten, and something of Dickens, which had put him to sleep. He did not know one note of music from another. But he had hunted big game in Africa, in Bengal, and he had penetrated Tibet. He had been in Iceland and among the Caribs. No carpet-knight was he.

"My dear, I had not seen him five times before I felt myself going. I think he knew it. But I had been cheated before, and so well that I held on with all my strength. While I was holding on, he disappeared. Not a word, not a line, not even so much as a p.p.c. In the course of time, through the merest accident, I learned that he was in Yucatan. Six months later I caught a glimpse of him in the street. Presently he called.

"At once, without so much as a preamble, he told me he had gone away that in absence he might learn whether I was as dear to him as he thought. He hesitated a moment. 'Will you let me love you?' he asked. 'You have been prudent,' I answered; 'let me be prudent too.' Then I told him of my disenchantments. I told him how difficult I found it to discover what men really were. I told him, as I have told you, that it seemed to me, if an intelligent girl admired her brother, it was because that brother was assuredly an admirable man. And I added that I would accept no man until I had the same opportunities of judging him as a sister has of judging her brother. Besides, I said, I have yet to know what love may be. It was then that we made the agreement of which you disapprove. After all,

it was my own suggestion, and, if unconventional, in what does the criterion consist? I was acting for the best. You do not imagine, do you, that I regret it?"

And to her lips came a smile.

"I took Mary, who, you must admit, is respectability personified, and whom I had long since elevated from nurse to sheep-dog—I took Mary, and, together, all three of us, we went abroad. It is in travelling that you get to know a man. Each evening, when he said good-night, my admiration had increased. From England, as you know, we went straight to India. It was a long trip, I had heard, but to me it seemed needlessly brief. During the entire journey I studied him as one studies a new science. I watched him as a cat watches a mouse. Not once did he do the slightest thing that jarred. During the entire journey he did not so much as attempt to take my hand in his. He knew, I suppose, as I knew, that if the time ever came I would give it unasked.

One evening, on going to my stateroom, I found I had left my vinaigrette on deck. Mary was asleep. I went back for it alone. It was very dark. On the way to where I had sat I heard his voice; he was talking to one of the passengers. In spite of myself I listened to what he was saying. I listened for nearly an hour. Not one word was there in it all that he could not have said to me. When I got back to my cabin I wondered whether it might not be that he knew I was standing there. Yes, I admit, I was suspicious; but circumstances had made me so. Oh, he has forgiven me since."

She smiled again complacently to herself, and, tucking the whip under her arm, she drew off a glove. On one finger was a narrow circle of gold. She looked at it and raised it to her lips.

"When we landed our journey had practically begun. You see, I was still unassured. Yet he was irreproachable and ever the same. Well, the details are unimportant. One day, at Benares, he heard that leopards had been seen in the neighbourhood of a lake some fifteen or twenty miles out. At once he was for having a crack at them. I determined to accompany him. He was surprised at first, and objected a little, but I managed, as I usually do, to have my own way. It was night when we got there. We left the horses with the guide, and, noiselessly as ghosts, we stole through a coppice which hid the lake from view. Almost at the water's edge we crouched and waited. The stars were white as lilies and splendid as trembling gems. The

silence was as absolute as night. How long we waited I cannot now recall. I think I dreamed a bit with open eyes. Then dimly I became conscious of something moving in the distance. The moon had risen like a balloon of gold, and in the air was the scent of sandal. Slowly, with an indolent grace of its own, that something neared the opposite shore. As it reached the water it stopped, arched its back, and turned. I saw then that it was a leopard. No, my dear, you can form no idea of the beauty of that beast. And then, suddenly, it threw its head back and called. It lapped the water, and then with its tongue gave its forepaw one long, lustrous lick, and called again ; a call that was echoless, yet so resonant I felt it thrill my finger-tips. In a moment its mate sprang from the shadows. If the first-comer was beautiful, then this one was the ideal. There they stood, caressing each other with amber, insatiate eyes. It was like a scene in fairyland. And as I watched them I felt a movement at my side. I turned. He had taken aim and was about to fire, but, as I turned, he turned to me. Those beasts, I told myself, are far too fair for death ; yet I said not a word. My dear, he read my unuttered wish, he lowered the gun, and then—then, for the first time, I knew what love might be. . . . There's the dog-cart now. Come over and dine to-morrow. If you care to, Ferris will show you the gun."

HENRY HARLAND
1861–1905

A BROKEN LOOKING-GLASS

HE climbed the three flights of stone stairs, and put his key into the lock; but before he turned it, he stopped—to rest, to take breath. On the door his name was painted in big white letters, Mr. Richard Dane. It is always silent in the Temple at midnight; to-night the silence was dense, like a fog. It was Sunday night; and on Sunday night, even within the hushed precincts of the Temple, one is conscious of a deeper hush.

When he had lighted the lamp in his sitting-room, he let himself drop into an armchair before the empty fireplace. He was tired, he was exhausted. Yet nothing had happened to tire him. He had dined, as he always dined on Sundays, with the Rodericks, in Cheyne Walk; he had driven home in a hansom. There was no reason why he should be tired. But he was tired. A deadly lassitude penetrated his body and his spirit like a fluid. He was too tired to go to bed.

"I suppose I am getting old," he thought.

To a second person the matter would have appeared not one of supposition but of certainty, not of progression but of accomplishment. Getting old indeed? But he *was* old. It was an old man, grey and wrinkled and wasted, who sat there, limp, sunken upon himself, in his easy-chair. In years, to be sure, he was under sixty; but he looked like a man of seventy-five.

"I am getting old, I suppose I am getting old."

And vaguely, dully, he contemplated his life, spread out behind him like a misty landscape, and thought what a failure it had been. What had it come to? What had it brought him? What had he done or won?

Nothing, nothing. It had brought him nothing but old age, solitude, disappointment, and, to-night especially, a sense of fatigue and apathy that weighed upon him like a suffocating blanket. On a table, a yard or two away, stood a decanter of whisky, with some soda-water bottles and tumblers; he looked at it with heavy eyes, and he knew that there was what he needed. A little whisky would

strengthen him, revive him, and make it possible for him to bestir himself and undress and go to bed. But when he thought of rising and moving to pour the whisky out, he shrank from that effort as from an Herculean labour; no—he was too tired. Then his mind went back to the friends he had left in Chelsea half an hour ago; it seemed an indefinably long time ago, years and years ago; they were like blurred phantoms, dimly remembered from a remote past.

Yes, his life had been a failure; total, miserable, abject. It had come to nothing; its harvest was a harvest of ashes. If it had been a useful life, he could have accepted its unhappiness; if it had been a happy life, he could have forgotten its uselessness; but it had been both useless and unhappy. He had done nothing for others, he had won nothing for himself. Oh, but he had tried, he had tried. When he had left Oxford people expected great things of him; he had expected great things of himself. He was admitted to be clever, to be gifted; he was ambitious, he was in earnest. He wished to make a name, he wished to justify his existence by fruitful work. And he had worked hard. He had put all his knowledge, all his talent, all his energy, into his work; he had not spared himself; he had passed laborious days and studious nights. And what remained to show for it? Three or four volumes upon Political Economy, that had been read in their day a little, discussed a little, and then quite forgotten—superseded by the books of newer men. "Pulped, pulped," he reflected bitterly. Except for a stray dozen of copies scattered here and there—in the British Museum, in his College library, on his own bookshelves—his published writings had by this time (he could not doubt) met with the common fate of unappreciated literature, and been "pulped."

"Pulped—pulped; pulped—pulped." The hateful word beat rhythmically again and again in his tired brain; and for a little while that was all he was conscious of.

So much for the work of his life. And for the rest? The play? The living? Oh, he had nothing to recall but failure. It had sufficed that he should desire a thing, for him to miss it; that he should set his heart upon a thing, for it to be removed beyond the sphere of his possible acquisition. It had been so from the beginning; it had been so always. He sat motionless as a stone, and allowed his thoughts to drift listlessly hither and thither in the current of memory. Everywhere they encountered wreckage, derelicts; defeated aspirations, broken hopes. Languidly he envisaged these. He was too tired to

resent, to rebel. He even found a certain sluggish satisfaction in recognising with what unvarying harshness destiny had treated him, in resigning himself to the unmerited.

He caught sight of his hand, lying flat and inert upon the brown leather arm of his chair. His eyes rested on it, and for the moment he forgot everything else in a sort of torpid study of it. How white it was, how thin, how withered; the nails were parched into minute corrugations; the veins stood out like dark wires; the skin hung loosely on it, and had a dry lustre; an old man's hand. He gazed at it fixedly, till his eyes closed and his head fell forward. But he was not sleepy, he was only tired and weak.

He raised his head with a start and changed his position. He felt cold; but to endure the cold was easier than to get up and put something on, or go to bed.

How silent the world was; how empty his room. An immense feeling of solitude, of isolation, fell upon him. He was quite cut off from the rest of humanity here. If anything should happen to him, if he should need help of any sort, what could he do? Call out? But who would hear? At nine in the morning the porter's wife would come with his tea. But if anything should happen to him in the meantime? There would be nothing for it but to wait till nine o'clock.

Ah, if he had married, if he had had children, a wife, a home of his own, instead of these desolate bachelor chambers!

If he had married, indeed! It was his sorrow's crown of sorrow that he had not married, that he had not been able to marry, that the girl he had wished to marry wouldn't have him. Failure? Success? He could have accounted failure in other things a trifle, he could have laughed at what the world calls failure, if Elinor Lynd had been his wife. But that was the heart of his misfortune, she wouldn't have him.

He had met her for the first time when he was a lad of twenty, and she a girl of eighteen. He could see her palpable before him now: her slender girlish figure, her bright eyes, her laughing mouth, her warm brown hair curling round her forehead. Oh, how he had loved her! For twelve years he had waited upon her, wooed her, hoped to win her. But she had always said, "No—I don't love you. I am very fond of you; I love you as a friend; we all love you that way—my mother, my father, my sisters. But I can't marry you." However, she married no one else, she loved no one else: and for twelve

years he was an ever-welcome guest in her father's house ; and she would talk with him, play to him, pity him ; and he could hope. Then she died. He called one day, and they said she was ill. After that there came a blank in his memory—a gulf, full of blackness and redness, anguish and confusion ; and then a sort of dreadful sudden calm, when they told him she was dead.

He remembered standing in her room, after the funeral, with her father, her mother, her sister Elizabeth. He remembered the pale daylight that filled it, and how orderly and cold and forsaken it all looked. And there was her bed, the bed she had died in ; and there her dressing-table, with her combs and brushes ; and there her writing-desk, her book-case. He remembered a row of medicine bottles on the mantelpiece ; he remembered the fierce anger, the hatred of them, as if they were animate, that had welled up in his heart as he looked at them, because they had failed to do their work.

" You will wish to have something that was hers, Richard," her mother said. " What would you like ? "

On her dressing-table there was a small looking-glass, in an ivory frame. He asked if he might have that, and carried it away with him. She had looked into it a thousand times, no doubt ; she had done her hair in it ; it had reflected her, enclosed her, contained her. He could almost persuade himself that something of her must remain in it. To own it was like owning something of herself. He carried it home with him, hugging it to his side with a kind of passion.

He had prized it, he prized it still, as his dearest treasure ; the looking-glass in which her face had been reflected a thousand times ; the glass that had contained her, known her ; in which something of herself, he felt, must linger. To handle it, look at it, into it, behind it, was like holding a mystic communion with her ; it gave him an emotion that was infinitely sweet and bitter, a pain that was dissolved in joy.

The glass lay now, folded in its ivory case, on the chimney-shelf in front of him. That was its place ; he always kept it on his chimney-shelf, so that he could see it whenever he glanced round the room. He leaned back in his chair and looked at it ; for a long time his eyes remained fixed upon it. " If she had married me, she wouldn't have died. My love, my care, would have healed her. She could not have died." Monotonously, automatically, the phrase repeated itself over and over again in his mind, while his eyes remained fixed on the ivory

case into which her looking-glass was folded. It was an effect of his fatigue, no doubt, that his eyes, once directed upon an object, were slow to leave it for another; that a phrase once pronounced in his thought had this tendency to repeat itself over and over again.

But at last he roused himself a little, and leaning forward, put his hand out and up, to take the glass from the shelf. He wished to hold it, to touch it and look into it. As he lifted it towards him it fell open, the mirror proper being fastened to a leather back, which was glued to the ivory, and formed a hinge. It fell open; and his grasp had been insecure; and the jerk as it opened was enough. It slipped from his fingers, and dropped with a crash upon the hearthstone.

The sound went through him like a physical pain. He sank back in his chair and closed his eyes. His heart was beating as after a mighty physical exertion. He knew vaguely that a calamity had befallen him; he could vaguely imagine the splinters of shattered glass at his feet. But his physical prostration was so great as to obliterate, to neutralise, emotion. He felt very cold. He felt that he was being hurried along with terrible speed through darkness and cold air. There was the continuous roar of rapid motion in his ears, a faint, dizzy bewilderment in his head. He felt that he was trying to catch hold of things, to stop his progress, but his hands closed upon emptiness; that he was trying to call out for help, but he could make no sound. On—on—on, he was being whirled through some immeasurable abyss of space.

. . . . . .

"Ah, yes, he's dead, quite dead," the doctor said. "He has been dead some hours. He must have passed away peacefully, sitting here in his chair."

"Poor gentleman," said the porter's wife. "And a broken looking-glass beside him. Oh, it's a sure sign, a broken looking-glass."

MARY E. WILKINS FREEMAN

B. 1862

A FAR-AWAY MELODY

THE clothes-line was wound securely around the trunks of four gnarled, crooked old apple-trees, which stood promiscuously about the yard back of the cottage. It was tree-blossoming time, but these were too aged and sapless to blossom freely, and there was only a white bough here and there shaking itself triumphantly from among the rest, which had only their new green leaves. There was a branch occasionally which had not even these, but pierced the tender green and the flossy white in hard grey nakedness. All over the yard, the grass was young and green and short, and had not yet gotten any feathery heads. Once in a while there was a dandelion set closely down among it.

The cottage was low, of a dark-red colour, with white facings around the windows, which had no blinds, only green paper curtains.

The back door was in the centre of the house, and opened directly into the green yard, with hardly a pretence of a step, only a flat oval stone before it.

Through this door, stepping cautiously on the stone, came presently two tall, lank women in chocolate-coloured calico gowns, with a basket of clothes between them. They set the basket underneath the line on the grass, with a little clothes-pin bag beside it, and then proceeded methodically to hang out the clothes. Everything of a kind went together, and the best things on the outside line, which could be seen from the street in front of the cottage.

The two women were curiously alike. They were about the same height, and moved in the same way. Even their faces were so similar in feature and expression that it might have been a difficult matter to distinguish between them. All the difference, and that would have been scarcely apparent to an ordinary observer, was a difference of degree, if it might be so expressed. In one face the features were both bolder and sharper in outline, the eyes were a trifle larger and brighter, and the whole expression more animated and decided than in the other.

One woman's scanty drab hair was a shade darker than the other's, and the negative fairness of complexion, which generally accompanies drab hair, was in one relieved by a slight tinge of warm red on the cheeks. This slightly intensified woman had been commonly considered the more attractive of the two, although in reality there was very little to choose between the personal appearance of these twin sisters, Priscilla and Mary Brown. They moved about the clothes-line, pinning the sweet white linen on securely, their thick, white-stockinged ankles showing beneath their limp calicoes as they stepped, and their large feet in cloth slippers flattening down the short green grass. Their sleeves were rolled up, displaying their long, thin, muscular arms, which were sharply pointed at the elbows.

They were homely women; they were fifty and over now, but they never could have been pretty in their 'teens, their features were too irredeemably irregular for that. No youthful freshness of complexion or expression could have possibly done away with the impression that they gave. Their plainness had probably only been enhanced by the contrast, and these women, to people generally, seemed better-looking than when they were young. There was an honesty and patience in both faces that showed all the plainer for their homeliness.

One, the sister with the darker hair, moved a little quicker than the other, and lifted the wet clothes from the basket to the line more frequently. She was the first to speak, too, after they had been hanging out the clothes for some little time in silence. She stopped as she did so, with a wet pillow-case in her hand, and looked up reflectively at the flowering apple-boughs overhead, and the blue sky showing between, while the sweet spring wind ruffled her scanty hair a little.

"I wonder, Mary," said she, "if it would seem so very queer to die a mornin' like this, say. Don't you believe there's apple branches a-hangin' over them walls made out of precious stones, like these, only there ain't any dead limbs among 'em, an' they're all covered thick with flowers? An' I wonder if it would seem such an awful change to go from this air into the air of the New Jerusalem." Just then a robin hidden somewhere in the trees began to sing. "I s'pose," she went on, "that there's angels instead of robins, though, and they don't roost up in trees to sing, but stand on the ground, with lilies growin' round their feet, may be, up to their knees, or on the gold stones in the street, an' play on their harps to go with the singin'."

The other sister gave a scared, awed look at her. "Lor, don't talk that way, sister," said she. "What has got into you lately? You make me crawl all over, talkin' so much about dyin'. You feel well, don't you?"

"Lor, yes," replied the other, laughing, and picking up a clothes-pin for her pillow-case; "I feel well enough, an' I don't know what has got me to talkin' so much about dyin' lately, or thinkin' about it. I guess it's the spring weather. P'r'aps flowers growin' make anybody think of wings sproutin' kinder naterally. I won't talk so much about it if it bothers you, an' I don't know but it's sorter nateral it should. Did you get the potatoes before we came out, sister?"—with an awkward and kindly effort to change the subject.

"No," replied the other, stooping over the clothes-basket. There was such a film of tears in her dull blue eyes that she could not distinguish one article from another.

"Well, I guess you had better go in an' get 'em, then; they ain't worth anything, this time of year, unless they soak a while, an' I'll finish hangin' out the clothes while you do it."

"Well, p'r'aps I'd better," the other woman replied, straightening herself up from the clothes-basket. Then she went into the house without another word; but down in the damp cellar, a minute later, she sobbed over the potato barrel as if her heart would break. Her sister's remarks had filled her with a vague apprehension and grief which she could not throw off. And there was something a little singular about it. Both these women had always been of a deeply religious cast of mind. They had studied the Bible faithfully, if not understandingly, and their religion had strongly tinctured their daily life. They knew almost as much about the Old Testament prophets as they did about their neighbours; and that was saying a good deal of two single women in a New England country town. Still this religious element in their natures could hardly have been termed spirituality. It deviated from that as much as anything of religion—which is in one way spirituality itself—could.

Both sisters were eminently practical in all affairs of life, down to their very dreams, and Priscilla especially so. She had dealt in religion with the bare facts of sin and repentance, future punishment and reward. She had dwelt very little, probably, upon the poetic splendours of the Eternal City, and talked about them still less. Indeed, she had always been reticent about her religious convictions, and had said very little about them even to her sister.

The two women, with God in their thoughts every moment, seldom had spoken His name to each other. For Priscilla to talk in the strain that she had to-day, and for a week or two previous, off and on, was, from its extreme deviation from her usual custom, certainly startling.

Poor Mary, sobbing over the potato barrel, thought it was a sign of approaching death. She had a few superstitious-like grafts upon her practical, commonplace character.

She wiped her eyes finally, and went upstairs with her tin basin of potatoes, which were carefully washed and put to soak by the time her sister came in with the empty basket.

At twelve exactly the two sat down to dinner in the clean kitchen, which was one of the two rooms the cottage boasted. The narrow entry ran from the front door to the back. On one side was the kitchen and living-room; on the other, the room where the sisters slept. There were two small unfinished lofts overhead, reached by a step-ladder through a little scuttle in the entry ceiling: and that was all. The sisters had earned the cottage and paid for it years before, by working as tailoresses. They had, besides, quite a snug little sum in the bank, which they had saved out of their hard earnings. There was no need for Priscilla and Mary to work so hard, people said; but work hard they did, and work hard they would as long as they lived. The mere habit of work had become as necessary to them as breathing.

Just as soon as they had finished their meal and cleared away the dishes, they put on some clean starched purple prints, which were their afternoon dresses, and seated themselves with their work at the two front windows; the house faced south-west, so the sunlight streamed through both. It was a very warm day for the season, and the windows were open. Close to them in the yard outside stood great clumps of lilac bushes. They grew on the other side of the front door too; a little later the low cottage would look half-buried in them. The shadows of their leaves made a dancing network over the freshly washed yellow floor.

The two sisters sat there and sewed on some coarse vests all the afternoon. Neither made a remark often. The room, with its glossy little cooking-stove, its eight-day clock on the mantel, its chintz-cushioned rocking-chairs, and the dancing shadows of the lilac leaves on its yellow floor, looked pleasant and peaceful.

Just before six o'clock a neighbour dropped in with her cream pitcher to borrow some milk for tea, and she sat down for a minute's

chat after she had got it filled. They had been talking a few moments on neighbourhood topics, when all of a sudden Priscilla let her work fall and raised her hand. "Hush!" whispered she.

The other two stopped talking, and listened, staring at her wonderingly, but they could hear nothing. "What is it, Miss Priscilla?" asked the neighbour, with round blue eyes. She was a pretty young thing, who had not been married long.

"Hush! Don't speak. Don't you hear that beautiful music?" Her ear was inclined towards the open window, her hand still raised warningly, and her eyes fixed on the opposite wall beyond them. Mary turned visibly paler than her usual dull paleness, and shuddered. "I don't hear any music," she said. "Do you, Miss Moore?"

"No-o," replied the caller, her simple little face beginning to put on a scared look, from a vague sense of a mystery she could not fathom. Mary Brown rose and went to the door, and looked eagerly up and down the street. "There ain't no organ-man in sight anywhere," said she, returning, "an' I can't hear any music, an' Miss Moore can't, an' we're both sharp enough o' hearin'. You're jest imaginin' it, sister."

"I never imagined anything in my life," returned the other, "an' it ain't likely I'm goin' to begin now. It's the beautifulest music. It comes from over the orchard there. Can't you hear it? But it seems to me it's growin' a little fainter like now. I guess it's movin' off, perhaps."

Mary Brown set her lips hard. The grief and anxiety she had felt lately turned suddenly to unreasoning anger against the cause of it; through her very love she fired with quick wrath at the beloved object. Still she did not say much, only, "I guess it must be movin' off," with a laugh, which had an unpleasant ring in it.

After the neighbour had gone, however, she said more, standing before her sister with her arms folded squarely across her bosom. "Now, Priscilla Brown," she exclaimed, "I think it's about time to put a stop to this. I've heard about enough of it. What do you s'pose Miss Moore thought of you? Next thing it'll be all over town that you're gettin' spiritual notions. To-day it's music that nobody else can hear, an' yesterday you smelled roses, and there ain't one in blossom this time o' year, and all the time you're talkin' about dyin'. For my part, I don't see why you ain't as likely to live as I am. You're uncommon hearty on vittles. You ate a pretty good dinner to-day for a dyin' person."

"I didn't say I was goin' to die," replied Priscilla meekly: the two sisters seemed suddenly to have changed natures. "An' I'll try not to talk so, if it plagues you. I told you I wouldn't this mornin', but the music kinder took me by surprise like, an' I thought may be you an' Miss Moore could hear it. I can jest hear it a little bit now, like the dyin' away of a bell."

"There you go agin!" cried the other sharply. "Do, for mercy's sake, stop, Priscilla. There ain't no music."

"Well, I won't talk any more about it," she answered patiently; and she rose and began setting the table for tea, while Mary sat down and resumed her sewing, drawing the thread through the cloth with quick, uneven jerks. That night the pretty girl neighbour was aroused from her first sleep by a distressed voice at her bedroom window, crying, "Miss Moore! Miss Moore!"

She spoke to her husband, who opened the window. "What's wanted?" he asked, peering out into the darkness.

"Priscilla's sick," moaned the distressed voice; "awful sick. She's fainted, an' I can't bring her to. Go for the doctor—quick! quick! *quick!*" The voice ended in a shriek on the last word, and the speaker turned and ran back to the cottage, where, on the bed, lay a pale, gaunt woman, who had not stirred since she left it. Immovable through all her sister's agony, she lay there, her features shaping themselves out more and more from the shadows, the bedclothes that covered her limbs taking on an awful rigidity.

"She must have died in her sleep," the doctor said, when he came, "without a struggle." When Mary Brown really understood that her sister was dead, she left her to the kindly ministrations of the good women who are always ready at such times in a country place, and went and sat by the kitchen window in the chair which her sister had occupied that afternoon.

There the women found her when the last offices had been done for the dead. "Come home with me to-night," one said; "Miss Green will stay with *her*," with a turn of her head towards the opposite room, and an emphasis on the pronoun which distinguished it at once from one applied to a living person.

"No," said Mary Brown; "I'm a-goin' to set here an' listen." She had the window wide open, leaning her head out into the chilly night air. The women looked at each other; one tapped her head, another nodded hers. "Poor thing!" said a third.

"You see," went on Mary Brown, still speaking with her head

leaned out of the window, " I was cross with her this afternoon because she talked about hearin' music. I was cross, an' spoke up sharp to her, because I loved her, but I don't think she knew. I didn't want to think she was goin' to die, but she was. An' she heard the music. It was true. An' now I'm a-goin' to set here an' listen till I hear it too, an' then I'll know she ain't laid up what I said agin me, an' that I'm a-goin' to die too."

They found it impossible to reason with her; there she sat till morning, with a pitying woman beside her, listening all in vain for unearthly melody.

Next day they sent for a widowed niece of the sisters, who came at once, bringing her little boy with her. She was a kindly young woman, and took up her abode in the little cottage, and did the best she could for her poor aunt, who, it soon became evident, would never be quite herself again. There she would sit at the kitchen window and listen day by day. She took a great fancy to her niece's little boy, and used often to hold him in her lap as she sat there. Once in a while she would ask him if he heard any music. " An innocent little thing like him might hear quicker than a hard, unbelievin' old woman like me," she told his mother once.

She lived so for nearly a year after her sister died. It was evident that she failed gradually and surely, though there was no apparent disease. It seemed to trouble her exceedingly that she never heard the music she listened for. She had an idea that she could not die unless she did, and her whole soul seemed filled with longing to join her beloved twin sister, and be assured of her forgiveness. This sister-love was all she had ever felt, besides her love of God, in any strong degree; all the passion of devotion of which this homely, commonplace woman was capable was centred in that, and the unsatisfied strength of it was killing her. The weaker she grew, the more earnestly she listened. She was too feeble to sit up, but she would not consent to lie in bed, and made them bolster her up with pillows in a rocking-chair by the window. At last she died, in the spring, a week or two before her sister had the preceding year. The season was a little more advanced this year, and the apple-trees were blossomed out further than they were then. She died about ten o'clock in the morning. The day before her niece had been called into the room by a shrill cry of rapture from her: " I've heard it! I've heard it! " she cried. " A faint sound o' music, like the dyin' away of a bell."

EDITH WHARTON
B. 1862

THE MOVING FINGER

I

THE news of Mrs. Grancy's death came to me with the shock of an immense blunder—one of fate's most irretrievable acts of vandalism. It was as though all sorts of renovating forces had been checked by the clogging of that one wheel. Not that Mrs. Grancy contributed any perceptible momentum to the social machine: her unique distinction was that of filling to perfection her special place in the world. So many people are like badly composed statues, overlapping their niches at one point and leaving them vacant at another. Mrs. Grancy's niche was her husband's life; and if it be argued that the space was not large enough for its vacancy to leave a very big gap, I can only say that, at the last resort, such dimensions must be determined by finer instruments than any ready-made standard of utility. Ralph Grancy's was, in short, a kind of disembodied usefulness: one of those constructive influences that, instead of crystallising into definite forms, remain as it were a medium for the development of clear thinking and fine feeling. He faithfully irrigated his own dusty patch of life, and the fruitful moisture stole far beyond his boundaries. If, to carry on the metaphor, Grancy's life was a sedulously cultivated enclosure, his wife was the flower he had planted in its midst—the embowering tree, rather, which gave him rest and shade at its foot and the wind of dreams in its upper branches.

We had all—his small but devoted band of followers—known a moment when it seemed likely that Grancy would fail us. We had watched him pitted against one stupid obstacle after another—ill-health, poverty, misunderstanding, and, worst of all for a man of his texture, his first wife's soft insidious egotism. We had seen him sinking under the leaden embrace of her affection like a swimmer in a drowning clutch; but just as we despaired he had always come to the surface again, blinded, panting, but striking out fiercely for the shore. When at last her death released him it became a question as to how much of

the man she had carried with her. Left alone, he revealed numb withered patches, like a tree from which a parasite has been stripped. But gradually he began to put out new leaves ; and when he met the lady who was to become his second wife—his one *real* wife, as his friends reckoned—the whole man burst into flower.

The second Mrs. Grancy was past thirty when he married her, and it was clear that she had harvested that crop of middle joy which is rooted in young despair. But if she had lost the surface of eighteen she had kept its inner light ; if her cheek lacked the gloss of immaturity her eyes were young with the stored youth of half a lifetime. Grancy had first known her somewhere in the East—I believe she was the sister of one of our consuls out there—and when he brought her home to New York she came among us as a stranger. The idea of Grancy's remarriage had been a shock to us all. After one such calcining most men would have kept out of the fire ; but we agreed that he was predestined to sentimental blunders, and we awaited with resignation the embodiment of his latest mistake. Then Mrs. Grancy came—and we understood. She was the most beautiful and the most complete of explanations. We shuffled our defeated omniscience out of sight, and gave it hasty burial under a prodigality of welcome. For the first time in years we had Grancy off our minds. " He'll do something great now ! " the least sanguine of us prophesied ; and our sentimentalist emended : " He *has* done it—in marrying her ! "

It was Claydon, the portrait-painter, who risked this hyperbole ; and who soon afterward, at the happy husband's request, prepared to defend it in a portrait of Mrs. Grancy. We were all—even Claydon—ready to concede that Mrs. Grancy's unwontedness was in some degree a matter of environment. Her graces were complementary, and it needed the mate's call to reveal the flash of colour beneath her neutral-tinted wings. But if she needed Grancy to interpret her, how much greater was the service she rendered him ! Claydon professionally described her as the right frame for him ; but if she defined she also enlarged, if she threw the whole into perspective she also cleared new ground, opened fresh vistas, reclaimed whole areas of activity that had run to waste under the harsh husbandry of privation. This interaction of sympathies was not without its visible expression. Claydon was not alone in maintaining that Grancy's presence—or indeed the mere mention of his name—had a perceptible effect on his wife's appearance. It was as though a light were shifted, a curtain drawn

back, as though, to borrow another of Claydon's metaphors, Love the indefatigable artist were perpetually seeking a happier " pose " for his model. In this interpretative light Mrs. Grancy acquired the charm which makes some women's faces like a book of which the last page is never turned. There was always something new to read in her eyes. What Claydon read there—or at least such scattered hints of the ritual as reached him through the sanctuary doors—his portrait in due course declared to us. When the picture was exhibited it was at once acclaimed as his masterpiece ; but the people who knew Mrs. Grancy smiled and said it was flattered. Claydon, however, had not set out to paint *their* Mrs. Grancy—or ours even—but Ralph's ; and Ralph knew his own at a glance. At the first confrontation he saw that Claydon had understood. As for Mrs. Grancy, when the finished picture was shown to her, she turned to the painter and said simply : " Ah, you've done me facing the east ! "

The picture, then, for all its value, seemed a mere incident in the unfolding of their double destiny, a footnote to the illuminated text of their lives. It was not till afterward that it acquired the significance of last words spoken on a threshold never to be recrossed. Grancy, a year after his marriage, had given up his town house and carried his bliss an hour's journey away, to a little place among the hills. His various duties and interests brought him frequently to New York, but we necessarily saw him less often than when his house had served as the rallying-point of kindred enthusiasms. It seemed a pity that such an influence should be withdrawn, but we all felt that his long arrears of happiness should be paid in whatever coin he chose. The distance from which the fortunate couple radiated warmth on us was not too great for friendship to traverse ; and our conception of a glorified leisure took the form of Sundays spent in the Grancys' library, with its sedative rural outlook, and the portrait of Mrs. Grancy illuminating its studious walls. The picture was at its best in that setting ; and we used to accuse Claydon of visiting Mrs. Grancy in order to see her portrait. He met this by declaring that the portrait *was* Mrs. Grancy ; and there were moments when the statement seemed unanswerable. One of us, indeed—I think it must have been the novelist—said that Claydon had been saved from falling in love with Mrs. Grancy only by falling in love with his picture of her ; and it was noticeable that he, to whom his finished work was no more than the shed husk of future effort, showed a perennial tenderness for this one

achievement. We smiled afterward to think how often, when Mrs. Grancy was in the room, her presence reflecting itself in our talk like a gleam of sky in the hurrying current, Claydon, averted from the real woman, would sit as it were listening to the picture. His attitude, at the time, seemed only a part of the unusualness of those picturesque afternoons, when the most familiar combinations of life underwent a magical change. Some human happiness is a landlocked lake; but the Grancys' was an open sea, stretching a buoyant and illimitable surface to the voyaging interests of life. There was room and to spare on those waters for all our separate ventures; and always, beyond the sunset, a mirage of the fortunate isles toward which our prows were bent.

II

It was in Rome that, three years later, I heard of her death. The notice said "suddenly." I was glad of that. I was glad too—basely perhaps—to be away from Grancy at a time when silence must have seemed obtuse and speech derisive.

I was still in Rome when, a few months afterward, he suddenly arrived there. He had been appointed Secretary of Legation at Constantinople, and was on the way to his post. He had taken the place, he said frankly, "to get away." Our relations with the Porte held out a prospect of hard work, and that, he explained, was what he needed. He could never be satisfied to sit down among the ruins. I saw that, like most of us in moments of extreme moral tension, he was playing a part, behaving as he thought it became a man to behave in the eye of disaster. The instinctive posture of grief is a shuffling compromise between defiance and prostration; and pride feels the need of striking a worthier attitude in face of such a foe. Grancy, by nature musing and retrospective, had chosen the rôle of the man of action, who answers blow for blow and opposes a mailed front to the thrusts of destiny; and the completeness of the equipment testified to his inner weakness. We talked only of what we were not thinking of, and parted, after a few days, with a sense of relief that proved the inadequacy of friendship to perform, in such cases, the office assigned to it by tradition.

Soon afterward my own work called me home, but Grancy remained several years in Europe. International diplomacy kept its promise of giving him work to do, and during the year in which he acted as

chargé d'affaires he acquitted himself, under trying conditions, with conspicuous zeal and discretion. A political redistribution of matter removed him from office just as he had proved his usefulness to the Government; and the following summer I heard that he had come home and was down at his place in the country.

On my return to town I wrote him, and his reply came by the next post. He answered as it were in his natural voice, urging me to spend the following Sunday with him, and suggesting that I should bring down any of the old set who could be persuaded to join me. I thought this a good sign, and yet—shall I own it?—I was vaguely disappointed. Perhaps we are apt to feel that our friends' sorrows should be kept like those historic monuments from which the encroaching ivy is periodically removed.

That very evening at the club I ran across Claydon. I told him of Grancy's invitation, and proposed that we should go down together; but he pleaded an engagement. I was sorry, for I had always felt that he and I stood nearer Ralph than the others, and if the old Sundays were to be renewed, I should have preferred that we two should spend the first alone with him. I said as much to Claydon, and offered to fit my time to his; but he met this by a general refusal.

"I don't want to go to Grancy's," he said bluntly. I waited a moment, but he appended no qualifying clause.

"You've seen him since he came back?" I finally ventured.

Claydon nodded.

"And he is so awfully bad?"

"Bad? No; he's all right."

"All right? How can he be, unless he's changed beyond all recognition?"

"Oh, you'll recognise *him*," said Claydon, with a puzzling deflection of emphasis.

His ambiguity was beginning to exasperate me, and I felt myself shut out from some knowledge to which I had as good a right as he.

"You've been down there already, I suppose?"

"Yes; I've been down there."

"And you've done with each other—the partnership is dissolved?"

"Done with each other? I wish to God we had!" He rose nervously and tossed aside the review from which my approach had diverted him. "Look here," he said, standing before me, "Ralph's

the best fellow going, and there's nothing under Heaven I wouldn't do for him—short of going down there again." And with that he walked out of the room.

Claydon was incalculable enough for me to read a dozen different meanings into his words ; but none of my interpretations satisfied me. I determined, at any rate, to seek no farther for a companion ; and the next Sunday I travelled down to Grancy's alone. He met me at the station, and I saw at once that he had changed since our last meeting. Then he had been in fighting array, but now if he and grief still housed together it was no longer as enemies. Physically, the transformation was as marked but less reassuring. If the spirit triumphed the body showed its scars. At five-and-forty he was grey and stooping, with the tired gait of an old man. His serenity, however, was not the resignation of age. I saw that he did not mean to drop out of the game. Almost immediately he began to speak of our old interests, not with an effort, as at our former meeting, but simply and naturally, in the tone of a man whose life has flowed back into its normal channels. I remembered, with a touch of self-reproach, how I had distrusted his reconstructive powers ; but my admiration for his reserved force was now tinged by the sense that, after all, such happiness as his ought to have been paid with his last coin. The feeling grew as we neared the house, and I found how inextricably his wife was interwoven with my remembrance of the place : how the whole scene was but an extension of that vivid presence.

Within doors nothing was changed, and my hand would have dropped without surprise into her welcoming clasp. It was luncheon-time, and Grancy led me at once to the dining-room, where the walls, the furniture, the very plate and porcelain, seemed a mirror in which a moment since her face had been reflected. I wondered whether Grancy, under the recovered tranquillity of his smile, concealed the same sense of her nearness, saw perpetually between himself and the actual her bright unappeasable ghost. He spoke of her once or twice, in an easy incidental way, and her name seemed to hang in the air after he had uttered it like a chord that continues to vibrate. If he felt her presence it was evidently as an enveloping medium, the moral atmosphere in which he breathed. I had never before known how completely the dead may survive.

After luncheon we went for a long walk through the autumnal fields and woods, and dusk was falling when we re-entered the house.

Grancy led the way to the library, where, at this hour, his wife had always welcomed us back to a bright fire and a cup of tea. The room faced the west, and held a clear light of its own after the rest of the house had grown dark. I remembered how young she had looked in this pale gold light, which irradiated her eyes and hair, or silhouetted her girlish outline as she passed before the windows. Of all the rooms the library was most peculiarly hers ; and here I felt that her nearness might take visible shape. Then, all in a moment, as Grancy opened the door, the feeling vanished and a kind of resistance met me on the threshold. I looked about me. Was the room changed ? Had some desecrating hand effaced the traces of her presence ? No ; here too the setting was undisturbed. My feet sank into the same deep-piled Daghestan ; the book-shelves took the firelight on the same rows of rich subdued bindings ; her armchair stood in its old place near the tea-table ; and from the opposite wall her face confronted me.

Her face—but *was* it hers ? I moved nearer and stood looking up at the portrait. Grancy's glance had followed mine, and I heard him move to my side.

" You see a change in it ? " he said.

" What does it mean ? " I asked.

" It means—that five years have passed."

" Over *her* ? "

" Why not ? Look at me ! " He pointed to his grey hair and furrowed temples. " What do you think kept *her* so young ? It was happiness ! But now—" He looked up at her with infinite tenderness. " I like her better so," he said. " It's what she would have wished."

" Have wished ? "

" That we should grow old together. Do you think she would have wanted to be left behind ? "

I stood speechless, my gaze travelling from his worn, grief-beaten features to the painted face above. It was not furrowed like his ; but a veil of years seemed to have descended on it. The bright hair had lost its elasticity, the cheek its clearness, the brow its light : the whole woman had waned.

Grancy laid his hand on my arm. " You don't like it ? " he said sadly.

" Like it ? I—I've lost her ! " I burst out.

" And I've found her," he answered.

"In *that*?" I cried, with a reproachful gesture.

"Yes; in that." He swung round on me almost defiantly. "The other had become a sham, a lie! This is the way she would have looked—does look, I mean. Claydon ought to know, oughtn't he?"

I turned suddenly. "Did Claydon do this for you?"

Grancy nodded.

"Since your return?"

"Yes. I sent for him after I'd been back a week—" He turned away and gave a thrust to the smouldering fire. I followed, glad to leave the picture behind me. Grancy threw himself into a chair near the hearth, so that the light fell on his sensitive, variable face. He leaned his head back, shading his eyes with his hand, and began to speak.

III

"You fellows knew enough of my early history to guess what my second marriage meant to me. I say guess, because no one could understand—really. I've always had a feminine streak in me, I suppose: the need of a pair of eyes that should see with me, of a pulse that should keep time with mine. Life is a big thing, of course; a magnificent spectacle; but I got so tired of looking at it alone! Still it's always good to live, and I had plenty of happiness—of the evolved kind. What I'd never had a taste of was the simple inconscient sort that one breathes in like the air. . . .

"Well—I met her. It was like finding the climate in which I was meant to live. You know what she was—how indefinitely she multiplied one's points of contact with life, how she lit up the caverns and bridged the abysses! Well, I swear to you (though I suppose the sense of all that was latent in me) that what I used to think of on my way home at the end of the day was simply that when I opened this door she'd be sitting over there, with the lamplight falling in a particular way on one little curl in her neck. . . . When Claydon painted her he caught just the look she used to lift to mine when I came in—I've wondered, sometimes, at his knowing how she looked when she and I were alone.—How I rejoiced in that picture! I used to say to her, 'You're my prisoner now—I shall never lose you. If you grew tired of me and left me you'd leave your real self there on the wall!' It was always one of our jokes that she was going to grow tired of me——

"Three years of it—and then she died. It was so sudden that there

was no change, no diminution. It was as if she had suddenly become fixed, immovable, like her own portrait: as if time had ceased at its happiest hour, just as Claydon had thrown down his brush one day and said, 'I can't do better than that.'

"I went away, as you know, and stayed over there five years. I worked as hard as I knew how, and after the first black months a little light stole in on me. From thinking that she would have been interested in what I was doing I came to feel that she *was* interested—that she was there and that she knew. I'm not talking any psychical jargon—I'm simply trying to express the sense I had that an influence so full, so abounding as hers couldn't pass like a spring shower. We had so lived into each other's hearts and minds that the consciousness of what she would have thought and felt illuminated all I did. At first she used to come back shyly, tentatively, as though not sure of finding me; then she stayed longer and longer, till at last she became again the very air I breathed. . . . There were bad moments, of course, when her nearness mocked me with the loss of the real woman; but gradually the distinction between the two was effaced and the mere thought of her grew warm as flesh and blood.

"Then I came home. I landed in the morning and came straight down here. The thought of seeing her portrait possessed me, and my heart beat like a lover's as I opened the library door. It was in the afternoon and the room was full of light. It fell on her picture—the picture of a young and radiant woman. She smiled at me coldly across the distance that divided us. I had the feeling that she didn't even recognise me. And then I caught sight of myself in the mirror over there—a grey-haired broken man whom she had never known!

"For a week we two lived together—the strange woman and the strange man. I used to sit night after night and question her smiling face; but no answer ever came. What did she know of me, after all? We were irrevocably separated by the five years of life that lay between us. At times, as I sat here, I almost grew to hate her; for her presence had driven away my gentle ghost, the real wife who had wept, aged, struggled with me during those awful years. . . . It was the worst loneliness I've ever known. Then, gradually, I began to notice a look of sadness in the picture's eyes; a look that seemed to say: 'Don't you see that *I* am lonely too?' And all at once it came over me how she would have hated to be left behind! I remembered her comparing life to a heavy book that could not be read with ease

unless two people held it together; and I thought how impatiently her hand would have turned the pages that divided us!—So the idea came to me: 'It's the picture that stands between us; the picture that is dead, and not my wife. To sit in this room is to keep watch beside a corpse.' As this feeling grew on me the portrait became like a beautiful mausoleum in which she had been buried alive: I could hear her beating against the painted walls and crying to me faintly for help. . . .

"One day I found I couldn't stand it any longer and I sent for Claydon. He came down and I told him what I'd been through, and what I wanted him to do. At first he refused point-blank to touch the picture. The next morning I went off for a long tramp, and when I came home I found him sitting here alone. He looked at me sharply for a moment, and then he said: 'I've changed my mind; I'll do it.' I arranged one of the north rooms as a studio, and he shut himself up there for a day; then he sent for me. The picture stood there as you see it now—it was as though she'd met me on the threshold and taken me in her arms! I tried to thank him, to tell him what it meant to me, but he cut me short.

"'There's an up-train at five, isn't there?' he asked. 'I'm booked for a dinner to-night. I shall just have time to make a bolt for the station, and you can send my traps after me.' I haven't seen him since.

"I can guess what it cost him to lay hands on his masterpiece; but, after all, to him it was only a picture lost, to me it was my wife regained!"

IV

After that, for ten years or more, I watched the strange spectacle of a life of hopeful and productive effort based on the structure of a dream. There could be no doubt to those who saw Grancy during this period that he drew his strength and courage from the sense of his wife's mystic participation in his task. When I went back to see him a few months later I found the portrait had been removed from the library and placed in a small study upstairs, to which he had transferred his desk and a few books. He told me he always sat there when he was alone, keeping the library for his Sunday visitors. Those who missed the portrait of course made no comment on its absence, and the few who were in his secret respected it. Gradually all his old

friends had gathered about him, and our Sunday afternoons regained something of their former character; but Claydon never reappeared among us.

As I look back now I see that Grancy must have been failing from the time of his return home. His invincible spirit belied and disguised the signs of weakness that afterward asserted themselves in my remembrance of him. He seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of life to draw on, and more than one of us was a pensioner on his superfluity.

Nevertheless, when I came back one summer from my European holiday and heard that he had been at the point of death, I understood at once that we had believed him well only because he wished us to.

I hastened down to the country and found him midway in a slow convalescence. I felt then that he was lost to us, and he read my thought at a glance.

"Ah," he said, "I'm an old man now, and no mistake. I suppose we shall have to go half-speed after this; but we shan't need towing just yet!"

The plural pronoun struck me, and involuntarily I looked up at Mrs. Grancy's portrait. Line by line I saw my fear reflected in it. It was the face of a woman *who knows that her husband is dying.* My heart stood still at the thought of what Claydon had done.

Grancy had followed my glance. "Yes, it's changed her," he said quietly. "For months, you know, it was touch and go with me—we had a long fight of it, and it was worse for her than for me." After a pause he added: "Claydon has been very kind; he's so busy nowadays that I seldom see him, but when I sent for him the other day he came down at once."

I was silent, and we spoke no more of Grancy's illness; but when I took leave it seemed like shutting him in alone with his death-warrant.

The next time I went down to see him he looked much better. It was a Sunday, and he received me in the library, so that I did not see the portrait again. He continued to improve, and towards spring we began to feel that, as he had said, he might yet travel a long way without being towed.

One evening, on returning to town after a visit which had confirmed my sense of reassurance, I found Claydon dining alone at the club.

He asked me to join him, and over the coffee our talk turned to his work.

"If you're not too busy," I said at length, "you ought to make time to go down to Grancy's again."

He looked up quickly. "Why?" he asked.

"Because he's quite well again," I returned, with a touch of cruelty. "His wife's prognostications were mistaken."

Claydon stared at me a moment. "Oh, *she* knows," he affirmed, with a smile that chilled me.

"You mean to leave the portrait as it is, then?" I persisted.

He shrugged his shoulders. "He hasn't sent for me yet!"

A waiter came up with the cigars, and Claydon rose and joined another group.

It was just a fortnight later that Grancy's housekeeper telegraphed for me. She met me at the station with the news that he had been "taken bad," and that the doctors were with him. I had to wait for some time in the deserted library before the medical men appeared. They had the baffled manner of empirics who have been superseded by the great Healer; and I lingered only long enough to hear that Grancy was not suffering, and that my presence could do him no harm.

I found him seated in his armchair in the little study. He held out his hand with a smile.

"You see she was right after all," he said.

"She?" I repeated, perplexed for the moment.

"My wife." He indicated the picture. "Of course I knew she had no hope from the first. I saw that"—he lowered his voice—"after Claydon had been here. But I wouldn't believe it at first!"

I caught his hands in mine. "For God's sake don't believe it now!" I adjured him.

He shook his head gently. "It's too late," he said. "I might have known that she knew."

"But, Grancy, listen to me," I began; and then I stopped. What could I say that would convince him? There was no common ground of argument on which we could meet; and after all it would be easier for him to die feeling that she *had* known. Strangely enough, I saw that Claydon had missed his mark. . . .

V

Grancy's will named me as one of his executors ; and my associate, having other duties on his hands, begged me to assume the task of carrying out our friend's wishes. This placed me under the necessity of informing Claydon that the portrait of Mrs. Grancy had been bequeathed to him ; and he replied by the next post that he would send for the picture at once. I was staying in the deserted house when the portrait was taken away ; and as the door closed on it I felt that Grancy's presence had vanished too. Was it his turn to follow her now, and could one ghost haunt another ?

After that, for a year or two, I heard nothing more of the picture, and though I met Claydon from time to time we had little to say to each other. I had no definable grievance against the man, and I tried to remember that he had done a fine thing in sacrificing his best picture to a friend ; but my resentment had all the tenacity of unreason.

One day, however, a lady whose portrait he had just finished begged me to go with her to see it. To refuse was impossible, and I went with the less reluctance that I knew I was not the only friend she had invited. The others were all grouped around the easel when I entered, and after contributing my share to the chorus of approval I turned away and began to stroll about the studio. Claydon was something of a collector, and his things were generally worth looking at. The studio was a long tapestried room with a curtained archway at one end. The curtains were looped back, showing a smaller apartment, with books and flowers and a few fine bits of bronze and porcelain. The tea-table standing in this inner room proclaimed that it was open to inspection, and I wandered in. A *bleu poudre* vase first attracted me ; then I turned to examine a slender bronze Ganymede, and in so doing found myself face to face with Mrs. Grancy's portrait. I stared up at her blankly, and she smiled back at me in all the recovered radiance of youth. The artist had effaced every trace of his later touches and the original picture had reappeared. It throned alone on the panelled wall, asserting a brilliant supremacy over its carefully chosen surroundings. I felt in an instant that the whole room was tributary to it : that Claydon had heaped his treasures at the feet of the woman he loved. Yes—it was the woman he had loved and not the picture ; and my instinctive resentment was explained.

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder.

"Ah, how could you?" I cried, turning on him.

"How could I?" he retorted. "How could I *not*? Doesn't she belong to me now?"

I moved away impatiently.

"Wait a moment," he said, with a detaining gesture. "The others have gone, and I want to say a word to you—Oh, I know what you've thought of me—I can guess! You think I killed Grancy, I suppose?"

I was startled by his sudden vehemence. "I think you tried to do a cruel thing," I said.

"Ah—what a little way you others see into life!" he murmured. "Sit down a moment—here, where we can look at her—and I'll tell you."

He threw himself on the ottoman beside me and sat gazing up at the picture, with his hands clasped about his knee.

"Pygmalion," he began slowly, "turned his statue into a real woman; *I* turned my real woman into a picture. Small compensation, you think—but you don't know how much of a woman belongs to you after you've painted her!—Well, I made the best of it, at any rate—I gave her the best I had in me; and she gave me in return what such a woman gives by merely being. And after all, she rewarded me enough by making me paint as I shall never paint again! There was one side of her, though, that was mine alone, and that was her beauty; for no one else understood it. To Grancy even it was the mere expression of herself—what language is to thought. Even when he saw the picture he didn't guess my secret—he was so sure she was all his! As though a man should think he owned the moon because it was reflected in the pool at his door——

"Well—when he came home and sent for me to change the picture it was like asking me to commit murder. He wanted me to make an old woman of her—of her who had been so divinely, unchangeably young! As if any man who really loved a woman would ask her to sacrifice her youth and beauty for his sake! At first I told him I couldn't do it—but afterward, when he left me alone with the picture, something queer happened. I suppose it was because I was always so confoundedly fond of Grancy that it went against me to refuse what he asked. Anyhow, as I sat looking up at her, she seemed to say, 'I'm not yours but his, and I want you to make me what he

wishes.' And so I did it. I could have cut my hand off when the work was done—I daresay he told you I never would go back and look at it. He thought I was too busy—he never understood. . . .

" Well—and then last year he sent for me again—you remember. It was after his illness, and he told me he'd grown twenty years older, and that he wanted her to grow older too—he didn't want her to be left behind. The doctors all thought he was going to get well at that time, and he thought so too ; and so did I when I first looked at him. But when I turned to the picture—ah, now I don't ask you to believe me ; but I swear it was *her* face that told me he was dying, and that she wanted him to know it ! She had a message for him, and she made me deliver it."

He rose abruptly and walked toward the portrait ; then he sat down beside me again.

" Cruel ? Yes, it seemed so, to me at first ; and this time, if I resisted, it was for *his* sake and not for mine. But all the while I felt her eyes drawing me, and gradually she made me understand. If she'd been there in the flesh (she seemed to say) wouldn't she have seen before any of us that he was dying ? Wouldn't he have read the news first in her face ? And wouldn't it be horrible if now he should discover it instead in strange eyes ?—Well—that was what she wanted of me and I did it—I kept them together to the last ! " He looked up at the picture again. " But now she belongs to me," he repeated.

LORIMER STODDARD
1863–1901

THE INDIAN'S HAND

THE men had driven away. Their carts and horses disappeared behind the roll of the low hills. They appeared now and then, like boats on the crest of a wave, farther each time. And their laughter and singing and shouts grew fainter as the bushes hid them from sight.

The women and children remained, with two old men to protect them. They might have gone too, the hunters said. "What harm could come in the broad daylight?—the bears and panthers were far away. They'd be back by night, with only two carts to fill."

Then Jim, the crack shot of the settlement, said, "We'll drive home the bears in the carts."

The children shouted and danced as they thought of the sport to come, of the hunters' return with their game, of the bonfires they always built.

One pale woman clung to her husband's arm. "But the Indians!" she said.

That made the men all laugh. "Indians!" they cried; "why, there've been none here for twenty years! We drove them away, down there"—pointing across the plain—"to a hotter place than this, where the sand burns their feet and they ride for days for water."

The pale woman murmured. "Ah, but they returned."

"Yes," cried her big husband, whose brown beard covered his chest, "and burned two cabins. Small harm they did, the curs!"

"Hush," said the pale woman, pressing her husband's arm; and the men around were quiet, pretending to fix their saddles, as they glanced at another woman, dressed in black, who turned and went into her house.

"I forgot her boy," said the bearded man, as he gravely picked up his gun.

They started off in the morning cool, toward the mountains where the trees grew. And the long shadows lessened as the sun crept up the sky.

The woman in black stood silent by her door. No one bade her good-bye. The other women went back to their houses to work. The children played in the dust; clouds rose as they shouted and ran. A day's freedom lay before them.

But the woman in black still stood by her door, like a spectre in the sunshine, her thin hands clasped together as she gazed away over the plain toward Mexico.

Her face was parched and drawn, as if the sun from the sand had burned into the bone. Her eyes alone seemed to live; they were hard and bright.

Her house was a little away from the rest, on the crest of a hill facing the desert plain.

She had heard the words of the bearded man: "Small harm the Indians did." Had he forgotten her boy? How could he forget, while she was there to remind them of the dead? Near her house was a small rock roughly marked. The rude letters, "Will, gone, '69," she had cut on it with her own hands. It marked the last place where her boy had played. She remembered how she went away softly—so he should not cry to follow her—without a word, without a kiss. Here her hands beat the side of the house.

"Oh, to have that kiss now and die!" But she had gone, unthinking, up the road where the pale woman lived, then a rosy-cheeked happy bride, not a widow like herself. They laughed and discussed the newcomers at the settlement. It was a holiday, for the men were away over the hills, cutting down trees to build their houses with.

As they talked there idly, they heard what they thought was the shrill bark of dogs running up the hill. Startled, they went to the window. Round the curve of the road came horses wildly galloping, and upon their backs— Here the pale woman shrieked and fled. They were Indians, beating their horses with their bare legs, their black hair streaming in the wind.

Like a flash, she had bolted the door and barred the shutters as they galloped up. She turned then. Through the open back door she saw the women run screaming up the hill, their children in their arms.

Their children! Where was hers? She stopped as if turned to stone, then undid the door.

They dragged her out by the wrists, by the hair. She fought with them stronger than ten men. But there were twenty; she was

alone. The little street was empty. They strangled her, beat down her face, dragged her upon a horse, and, with her crosswise on the saddle, galloped up and down, as they fired the cabins and the sheds. Her hands were shackled, and her eyes blind with blood, but she thought only of her child. " Where could he be ? "

There were gunshots. Down the hills like mad came the white men for their wives and children.

Then the Indians turned back toward the plain. They rode past her house.

There, where she had left him, stood the child, dazed with surprise. She held out her arms tied together and called to him to come.

" Fool ! fool ! " Here the woman in black struck her temples with her hands. " Fool ! " Why had she not galloped by and never noticed him ?

But she begged, caught at the horse's head, struggled to get to him ; and the Indian stopped for a moment in his flight and caught up the child and went on.

Then the thought came to her of the end of that ride—what was to come—after. And she tried to drop the boy, to let him slide gently to the ground ; but the Indian held them fast.

Behind, nearer, came the following men, louder the guns. The horse she was on snorted, staggered under the weight of the three, and as they reached the plain the child was torn from her, she was pushed away. But she rose and staggered after them amid the blinding dust. They must take her too. Sobbing, she called to them as she stumbled on. Many times she fell. Then she could go no more.

That was all. Her story ended there, with the thundering of horses' hoofs and the taste of dust in her mouth. They found her there unconscious. Her friends tended her. When she came back to life she asked no questions but left her neighbour's house and came to her door, where she was standing now, and gazed away over the sand where *he* had gone, down toward Mexico.

The years went by, and she was still alone in the house where *two* should have been. And now far off she saw the dust blowing in a long, rolling, pinkish line. But the dust blew so often, and nothing came of it—not even the Indians.

The boy she knew was dead, but they—his murderers—remained somewhere.

If she could have one now in her power !

The woman in black pondered, as she had so many times, how she should torture him. No pain could be too horrible. She looked at the fire in the stove, and piled on the logs—the logs that were brought with such trouble from the mountains where the trees grew. She could not make it hot enough. She dropped on her knees and watched the iron grow red. And the letters of the maker's name stamped on it grew distinct, and the word "Congress," half defaced, and the figures "64." Ah, those letters! she could have kissed the spot, for her child had touched it. Charmed by the glow, when left alone, he laid his baby hand flat on it, and burned deep into the palm were those letters, "S S, 64."

She would know him among a million by that mark.

But he was dead. The Indians remained.

The woman in black stood up. Why should she not go to them? There were pools in the plain where she could drink. That would be enough.

The men were away; the women were at work. Who could stop her?

She put on her bonnet and started off down the hill through the green bushes. The air was still crisp, though the sun was hot.

The desert must have an end. She would keep on to Mexico. She walked quickly, and her dress grew grey with dust, and the air scorching, as she reached the plain. But she kept on, and only looked back once at the house on the hill, and at the window where the pale woman sat.

The dust choked her, and she stumbled, and the sole of one shoe came half off, and slapped, and banged, and delayed her as she walked. She tore it off and went on, but the sand cut and burned her so that she sat down and wept, and wanted to go back for her other pair, the ones she wore on Sundays. The hill, though, looked so distant that she wearily got up and went on, on, till she could go no more, and crept under the shadow of a rock. There was no water near. Her throat was parched, and her temples beat wildly. She must go back and start again, strengthened, fortified. She would start to-morrow, or at night, when the cool would let her get too far to return.

By slow degrees she dragged herself up the hill. The pale woman came out of her house, and nodded, but the woman in black did not smile in return. She closed her door, and went up to her bed, and fell

on it, and slept, amid the buzzing of the flies and the fitful flapping of the window-shade in the breeze.

The pale woman sighed and glanced across the plain. The roll of blowing dust was larger, and more regular, and nearer. The woman shuddered as she watched it creep slowly along behind the sand mounds. "It always blows," she said to herself, "but not like that, so steadily, so even." She strained her eyes, but there was only dust to be seen. Then she thought of a telescope that belonged to the minister's wife, who came from a seaport town, and ran to fetch it. The two women came out with it together, the minister's wife laughing at her friend, she was such a timid thing!

But the pale woman was paler than ever, and trembled so she could not steady it. The laughing one looked through it, and laughed no more.

"I see a head over the mound there," she said.

The pale woman shrieked.

"They are miles away. We may have time."

"For what?"

"To get away."

"They may be friends——"

"They are Indians! White men would not live through that sand. We must go to the woods. Help me. Warn the women. Gather the children. Come."

She rushed into her house. The other still stood and looked.

The dust cloud was a little nearer. In a moment all was wild confusion, names were called, but not loudly, girls sobbed, some carried their little treasures, mothers held their children. All gathered together, hidden from the plain by a house.

The pale woman led out her father, then ran to her neighbour's door. She opened it, and called clearly, but softly, "Mary, Mary," There was no answer. The woman in black, on her bed, slept on. Her neighbour hesitated, then hurried after the others, as they ran up the low hills toward the mountains, where their men had gone.

The dust cloud grew nearer. Now and then a head could be seen. But all was as still as the grave. The woman in black slept heavily and dreamed that revenge had come at last—that in her hand she held an Indian's head.

The window-shade flapped loudly, and she woke with an apprehension crushing her. She went to the window and looked out.

There was no blowing dust upon the plains, and the street was empty. The doors of the houses stood open ; a shawl lay in the middle of the road. The woman leaned out and looked toward the woods.

She saw on the crest of a hill the white skirts of the flying women, and then, below, down the road, her ears sharpened, her heart tightening, she heard the soft, regular thumping of horses' feet.

Then she *knew*.

She sat on the edge of the bed. This was what she had waited for ! Was it her turn now ?—or theirs again ?

She could kill *one*.

Where was her gun ?

She had loaned it to the men.

But her axe—that was below.

As she started for it, there was a burst of war cries.

She ran down the narrow stairs, and took the axe from its place on the wall.

They were passing her door. The room grew lighter. She turned. One stood in the open doorway, black against the sunshine. She set her teeth hard, hid the axe behind her skirts, watched him motionless.

He stretched out his hand clawlike, and laughed, his eyes gleaming, as catlike he moved nearer. A terror seized her ; with a hoarse cry, she sprang up the stairs, flinging down a chair as he followed panting.

Quickly she climbed up the ladder to the loft, threw down the trap-door, fell on it, bolted it, waited. All was still. Outside she heard the distant yells. She stooped noiselessly and put her ear upon the floor. There was soft breathing underneath, and through a crack in the floor she saw an eye peering up at her.

She stood a long time, motionless, axe in hand, ready.

Her back was to the bolt, but suddenly she *felt* that there was something there. She turned softly. A slim brown hand was almost through a crevice in the floor.

She raised her axe. The slender fingers touched the bolt and gently drew it back.

Then with the force of all her hatred fell the axe upon the wrist. The hand sprang up at her. With a howl of agony the creature fell bumping beneath.

Then all again was still.

Her face was wet and warm with the spattered blood.

Outside she heard the crackling of a burning house, then gunshots

far away, and distant shouts. On tiptoe she went to the garret window, and peeped round its edge. Over the hills, quite near, she saw the men returning. One house was blazing—the minister's. The Indians were retreating. Near her door, grazing, stood a riderless horse. *She* knew its owner. As they rode past, they caught at it, but were stopped by a shout from her door. An Indian rushed out, handsome, young, holding aloft a bare right arm without a hand. In his language he shrieked to them for revenge, pointing up with his red wrist to the attic where she stood.

The eyes of the woman shot fire. She leaned far out and shook her fist from the garret window.

" One Indian at least ! "

She hurled the axe at them. It fell far short. They fired as they passed, but none hit her. Nearer came the men.

The wounded man leaped to his horse and with a curse rode on. The woman laughed as he passed beneath, then sat down in the dusky loft with a red pool at her feet.

Shortly the men returned. Some went by down the hill, after the Indians. Others put out the fire. All was confusion, bustle, shouts.

Then the women and the children came and added to the din, and the men who had followed returned. But the woman in black sat alone in the loft, till she heard the crowd at her door below, and the voice of the pale woman say :

" Where is Mary ? "

She rose and lifted the trap-door — it was unbolted — and went down.

The pale woman came to her, but she pushed her aside, and wiped her face with her sleeve.

" Are they killed ? any of them ? " she said. Her friend answered, " No, Mary, not one." " No harm this time," said the bearded man. " Except my house, it is burned," said the minister's wife. " We'll soon have another."

" I don't mean *you !* " cried the woman in black. " I mean them —red devils. Have you got any ?—killed any ? *You* "—this to Jim, who never missed a shot—" you "—this to the bearded man— " have *you* killed any ? "

And the men answered, " No."

And one man said, " Their horses were faster than ours."

" Not one ! " The woman in black drew herself up proudly.

" Yes, one ; better than killed. Wait." The women shrunk from her as she darted up the stair. They looked at each other wonderingly. The woman returned with something in her grasp. She flung it on the table. " It is an Indian's hand. His arm will shrivel to the bone. They will leave him some day to die in the sand." The women shuddered and drew back ; the men crowded round, but they did not touch the hand.

" Are you afraid ? " said the woman in black. " Afraid of that thing ! "

She bent back the fingers and looked in it with a smile of contempt. Her face took an ashen hue : the hand struck the table edge and fell upon the floor. She seemed to be trying to think for a second, then she gave one awful cry, and leaned her face against the wall, with her hands hanging at her side.

The pale woman tried to go to her, but her husband drew her back, and, with a silent crowd around, slowly picked up the hand.

For a second he hesitated, then did as she had done, but gently. He bent back the fingers of the severed hand and read its history written there, " S S, 64," in white letters on the palm.

He remembered then how, twenty years ago, when she brought the child to him, he had tied its little hand in cooling salve.

It was larger now.

The whisper went around, " It is her boy's hand," and they crept toward the door.

The pale woman took a flower from her dress, one she had put there hours before, and placed it in the brown fingers on the table and went out.

The woman did not stir from the wall. " Leave the hand," she said.

" It is there," and the bearded man closed the door gently behind him.

The woman in black turned. Her hard eyes were dim now. She took the hand from the table and undid her dress and placed it in her breast, and went to the window, and watched, far off, a cloud of dust made golden by the sun, as it rolled away across the plain, down toward Mexico.

Mary E. Wilkins

MARY TRACY EARLE
B. 1864

THE MAN WHO WORKED FOR COLLISTER

PERHAPS the loneliest spot in all the pine woods was the big Collister farm. Its buildings were not huddled in the centre of it, where they could keep one another in countenance, but each stood by itself, facing the desolate stretches of grey sand and pine stumps in its own way. Near each a few uncut pine trees kept guard, presumably for shade, but really sending their straggling shadows far beyond the mark. Many a Northern heart had ached from watching them, they were so tall and isolate; for, having been forest-bred, they had a sad and detached expression when they stood alone or in groups, just like the Northern faces when they met the still distances of the South.

In Collister's day he and the man who worked for him were the only strangers who had need to watch the pines. A land-improvement company had opened up the farm, but after sinking all its money in the insatiable depths of sandy soil, where the Lord, who knew best, had planted pine trees, the great bustling company made an assignment of its stumpy fields, and somewhat later the farm passed into the hands of Collister. Who Collister was, and where he came from, were variously related far and wide through the piney woods; for he was one of those people whose lives are an odd blending of reclusion and notoriety. He kept up the little store on the farm; and, though it was usually his man who came up from the fields when any one stood at the closed store and shouted, its trade was largely augmented by the hope of seeing Collister.

The sunken money of the land company must have enriched the soil, for the farm prospered as well as the store, yielding unprecedentedly in such patches as the two men chose to cultivate. In midsummer the schooner-captains, in their loose red shirts, came panting up two sunburned miles from the bayou to chaffer with Collister or his man over the price of water-melons; and when their schooners were loaded, the land breeze which carried the cool green freight

through bayou and bay out to the long reaches of the sound, where the sea wind took the burden on, sent abroad not only schooner and cargo and men, but countless strange reports of the ways and doings of Collister. At least one of these bulletins never changed. Year after year, when fall came, and he had added the season's proceeds to his accumulating wealth—when even the peanuts had been dug, and the scent of their roasting spread through the piney woods on the fresh air of the winter evenings, making an appetising advertisement for the store—it was whispered through the country, and far out on the gulf, that Collister said he would marry any girl who could make good bread—light bread. That settled at least one question: Collister came from the North. The man who worked for him was thought to have come from the same place; but though he did the cooking, his skill must have left something to be desired, and after current gossip had risked all its surmises on the likelihood of Collister's finding a wife under the condition imposed, it usually added that if Collister married, the man who worked for him would take it as a slight, and leave.

An old country road led through the big farm, and along it the country people passed in surprising numbers and frequency for so sparsely settled a region. They took their way leisurely; and if they could not afford a five-cent purchase at the store gave plenty of time to staring right and left behind the stumps, in a cheerful determination to see something worth remembrance. One day, when the store chanced to be standing open, one of these passers walked up to the threshold and stood for a while looking in. The room was small and dingy, lighted only by the opening of the door, and crammed with boxes, leaky barrels, farm produce, and side-meat. One corner had been arranged with calicoes and ribbons and threads; but though the inspector was a young and pretty girl in the most dingy of cotton gowns, she had scarcely a thought for that corner; she was staring at a man who was so hard at work rearranging the boxes and barrels that he did not notice her shadow at his elbow. Finally he glanced up of his own accord.

"Hello!" he said, coming forward; "do you want to buy something? Why didn't you sing out?"

For a little while longer the girl stared at him steadily as if he had not moved. Most of the people who live in the pine woods come to have a ragged look, but he was the raggedest person she had ever

seen. He was as ragged as a bunch of pine needles; yet he had the same clean and wholesome look, and his face was pleasant.

"Are you the man that works for Collister?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

The girl looked him up and down again with innocent curiosity. "How much does he give you?" she asked.

"Nothing but my board and clothes," the man answered, and smiled. He did not seem to find it hard work to stand still and watch her while her black eyes swiftly catalogued each rag. When they reached his bare brown feet she laughed.

"Then I think he had ought to dress you better, an' give you some shoes," she said.

"He does—winters," the man answered calmly.

She gave an impatient shake of her sun-bonnet. "That isn't the thing—just to keep you all warm," she explained. "A man like Mr. Collister had ought to keep you looking 'ristocratic."

The man who worked for Collister grinned. "Not very much in Collister's line," he said. "We might get mixed up if I was too dressy." He pulled a cracker-box forward, and dusted it. "If you ain't in a hurry, you'd better come inside and take a seat," he added.

The girl sank to the doorstep instead, taking off her bonnet. Its slats folded together as she dropped it into her lap, and she gave a sigh of relief, loosening some crushed tresses of hair from her forehead. She seemed to be settling down for a comfortable inquisition.

"What kind of clothes does Mr. Collister wear?" she began.

The man drew the cracker-box up near the doorway, and sat down. "Dressy," he said, "'bout like mine."

The girl gave him a look which dared to say, "I don't believe it."

"Honest truth," the man nodded. "Would you like to have me call him up from the field, and show him to you?"

Not to assent would have seemed as if she were daunted, and yet the girl had many more questions to ask about Collister. "Pretty soon," she said. "I suppose if you don't call him, he'll be coming for you. They say he works you mighty hard."

It is never pleasant to be spoken of as something entirely subject to another person's will. A slow flush spread over the man's face, but he answered loyally, "Collister may be mean to some folks, but he's always been mighty good to me." He smiled as he looked off from stump to stump across the clearing to the far rim of the forest.

The stumps seemed to be running after one another, and gathering in groups to whisper secrets. "You've got to remember that this is a God-forsaken hole for anybody to be stuck in," he said; "'tain't in humanity for him to keep his soul as white as natural, more'n his skin; but there's this to be said for Collister: he's always good to me."

"I'm right glad of that," the girl said. She too was looking out at the loneliness, and a little of it was reflected on her face. "You-all must think a heap of him," she added wistfully.

"You can just bet on that," he declared. "I've done him a heap of mean turns, too; but they was always done 'cause I didn't know any better, so he don't hold me any grudge."

"Wouldn't he mind if he knew you were a-losing time by sitting here talking to me?" she asked.

The man shook his head. "No," he answered cheerfully, "he wouldn't care—not for me. There isn't anybody else he would favour like that, but he makes it a point to accommodate me."

The girl gave her head a little turn. "Do you think he would accommodate me?" she asked.

He looked her over critically as she had first looked at him. "It's a dangerous business answering for Collister," he ventured; "but maybe if I asked him he would."

"Well, you *are* bigoty," she asserted. "I can't noways see what there is betwixt you. Why, they say that whilst you're working he comes out in the field, an' bosses you under a umbrelly; an' "—a laugh carried her words along like leaves on dancing water—"an' that he keeps a stool stropped to his back, ready to set down on whenever he pleases. Is it true—'hones' truth'?"

A great mirth shook Collister's man from head to foot. "Such a figure—such a figure as the old boy cuts!" he gasped. "Sometimes I ask him if he'll keep his stool strapped on when he goes a-courting; and he says maybe so—it'll be so handy to hitch along closer to the young lady." Without thinking, he illustrated with the cracker-box as he spoke. "And as for the umbrella, I certainly ain't the one to object to that; for, you see, when the sun's right hot he holds it over me."

He leaned half forward as he spoke, smiling at her. It is hard to tell exactly when a new acquaintance ceases to be a stranger; but as the girl on the doorstep smiled in answer she was unexpectedly

aware that the shrewd, kindly, furrowed face of this young man who worked for Collister was something which she had known for a long, long time. It seemed as familiar as the scent of pine needles and myrtle, or as the shafts of blue, smoke-stained sunlight between the brown trunks of the pine trees in the fall, or as the feathery outline of green pine-tops against the dreamy intensity of a Southern sky; and when all this has been said of a girl who lives in the "pineys" there is no necessity for saying more. She gave a little nervous laugh.

The man began talking again. "It ain't such foolery as you would think, his wearing the stool and carrying the umbrella," he said. "This is the way he reasons it out, he says. In the first place there's the sun; that's a pretty good reason. But what started it was a blazing day up North, when he was hustling four deals at once; a man would need a head the size of a barrel to keep that sort of thing going for long, and Collister has just an ordinary head no bigger than mine. Well, the upshot of it was that he had a sunstroke, and was laid up a month; and then he reckoned up the day's business, and what he'd gained on one deal he'd lost on another, so that he came out even to a cent—queer, wasn't it?—with just the experience of a sunstroke to add to his stock-in-trade. Then he bought himself an umbrella and a stool, and began to take life fair and easy. Easy going is my way too; that's why we get along together."

There was a jar of candy on a shelf behind him and above his head, and turning, he reached up a long arm and took it down. It was translucent stick candy with red stripes round it—just such candy as every fortunate child knew twenty years ago, and some know still. In the piney woods it has not been superseded as a standard of delight, and the children expect to receive it gratuitously after any extensive purchase. Near the coast, where Creole words have spread, it is asked for by a queer sweet name—lagnappe (something thrown in for good measure). The man who worked for Collister handed the jar across to the girl, making her free of it with a gesture.

"Do you reckon Mr. Collister would want me to take some?" she asked, poising her slender brown hand on the edge of the jar. "You know, they say that when he first come hyar, an' the children asked him for lagnappe, he pretended not to onderstan' 'em, and said he was sorry, but he hadn't got it yet in stock. Is that true?"

"Yes," the man answered; "that's true."

"Well, *did* he onderstan'?" she asked.

He lifted his shoulders in a way he had learned in the South. "To be sure," he said. "I told him at the time that it was a mean thing to do, but he said he simply couldn't help himself; young ones kept running here from miles around to get five cents' worth of baking-sody and ask for a stick of candy. But take some; he won't mind, for he's always good to me."

She drew back her hand. "No," she said, pouting; "I'm going to come in sometime when he's hyar, an' see if he'll give some lagnappe to me."

"I'll tell him to," the man said.

"Well, you *are* bigoty!" the girl repeated.

"If I was to tell him to," the man persisted, "who should I say would ask for it?"

She looked at him defiantly. "I'll do the telling," she said; "but while we're talking about names, what's yours?"

"Well," he answered, "if you're not naming any names, I don't believe I am. You know considerably more about me already than I do about you."

"Oh, just as you please," she said. To be brought blankly against the fact that neither knew the other's name caused a sense of constraint between them. She picked up her bonnet and put it on as if she might be about to go; and though she did not rise, she turned her face out-of-doors so that the bonnet hid it from him—and it was such a pretty face!

"Say, now," he began, after one of those pauses in which lives sometimes sway restlessly to and fro in the balances of fate, "I didn't mean to make you mad. I'll tell my name if you want to know."

"I'm not so anxious," she said. One of her brown hands went up officiously and pulled the bonnet still farther forward. "Is it true," she asked, "that Mr. Collister says he will marry any girl that can make good light bread?"

The man formed his lips as if to whistle, and then stopped. "Yes," he said, eyeing the sun-bonnet, "it's true."

She turned round and surprised him. "I can make good light bread," she announced.

"You!" he said.

"Yes," she answered sharply; "why not? It ain't so great a trick."

" But "—he paused, meeting the challenge of her face uneasily—" but did you come here to say that ? "

" You've heard me say it," she retorted.

He rose and stood beside her, looking neither at her, nor at the fields, nor at the encircling forest, but far over and beyond them all, at the first touches of rose-colour on the soft clouds in the west. He seemed very tall as she looked up at him, and his face was very grave. She had forgotten long ago to notice his bare feet and tattered clothing. " So that means," he said slowly, " that you came here to offer to marry a man that you never saw."

She did not answer for a moment, and when she did her voice was stubborn. " No," she said ; " I came hyar to say that I know how to make light bread. You needn't be faultin' me for his saying that he would marry any girl that could."

" But you would marry him ? "

" I allow if he was to ask me I would."

The man looked down squarely to meet her eyes, but he found only the sun-bonnet. " What would you do it for," he asked ; " a lark ? "

" A lark ? " she echoed ; " oh, yes, a lark ! "

He stooped toward her and put his hand on her shoulder. " Look up here," he said ; " I want to see if it's a lark or not."

" I jus' said it was," she answered, so low that he had to bend a little closer to be certain that he heard.

" That won't do," he said firmly ; " you must look up into my face."

" I—won't ! " she declared.

He stood gazing at her downcast head. There was something that shone in his eyes, and his tongue was ready to say, " You must." He closed his lips and straightened himself again. The girl sat perfectly still, except that once in a while there was a catch in her breath. He kept looking off into the empty, sighing reaches of pine country, which could make people do strange things. " We haven't known each other very long," he said at last ; " but a few minutes ago I thought we knew each other pretty well, and perhaps you don't have any better friend than I am in this desolate hole. Won't you tell me why it is you want to marry Collister ? "

" For his money ! " the girl answered shortly.

His face darkened as if he were cursing Collister's money under

his breath; but she did not look up, and he said nothing until he could speak quietly. "Is that quite fair to Collister?" he asked. "He did talk about marrying any girl that could make good light bread; but I don't suppose he wanted to do it unless she liked him a little, too."

"I—allowed—maybe I'd like him a little," the girl explained; "an' I was right sure that he'd like me."

"That's the mischief of it," the man muttered; "I'll warrant he'll like you!"

After hiding her face so long the girl looked up, and was surprised to see him so troubled. "You've been right good to me," she said gently, "an' I reckon I don't mind—perhaps I had ought to tell you jus' why I come. I—I don't think it's fair; I won't tell him I can make good bread; only"—she met his eyes appealingly—"if I don't, I don't see what I'm going to do."

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Don't you have any home?"

She smiled bravely, so that it was sorrowful to see her face. "Not any more," she said. "I've always had a right good home, but my paw died—only las' week. You an' Mr. Collister used to know him, an' he has spoken of you—both of you. He was Noel Seymour from up at Castauplay."

"Noel Seymour—dead?" said the man. All her light words pleaded with him for tenderness now that he knew she had said them with aching heart. "But Seymour was a Creole," he added, "and you are not."

"My own mother was an American," the girl answered, "an' I learned my talk from her before she died; an' then my stepmother is American, too." She stopped just long enough to try to smile again. "What do you think?" she asked. "My stepmother don't like me. She isn't going to let me stay at home any more. Could you be as mean as that?"

He put his hand on her shoulder. "You poor child!" he said; for gossip came sometimes in return for all that radiated from the farm, and he could recall a cruel story he once heard of Noel Seymour's wife. It made him believe all and more than the girl had told him. "Poor child!" he said again; "you haven't told me yet your first name."

"Ginevra," she answered. "My own mother liked it; my stepmother says it's the name of a fool. She thinks she's young an'

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han'some; but I allow she's sending me off because I'm a right smart, the best-favoured of the two. She wants to get married again, an' thar ain't but one bachelor up our way, so she's skeered he'd take first pick of me."

"My kingdom!" said the man who worked for Collister. "If there's somebody up your way that you know, and that likes you, why didn't you go and take your chances with him?"

A hot flush rushed over the girl's face. "Does you-all think I'd be talkin' like this to a man I knowed?" she demanded. She stared angrily until her lips began to quiver. "An' besides, I hate him!" she cried. "He's not a fittin' man for such as me."

"You poor child!" he said again.

She caught the compassion of his eyes. "What had any girl ought to do out hyar in the pineys if she was lef' like me? I've hearn o' places whar girls could find work, an' my stepmother she allowed I could go to the oyster-factories in Potosi; but whar would I *stay*? An' then I went to the factories once with my paw, an' the air round 'em made me sick. You see, I was raised in the pineys, an' they had a different smell."

He shook his head, though kindly, at so slight a reason, and the sharp pain of his disapproval crossed her face. "Oh, you don't know anything about it," she cried desperately; "thar ain't no man that can tell how it feels for a girl that's had a father that's made of her like mine did to be turned right out to face a whole townful that she never saw. Can't you see how if you was skeered it would be a heap easier jus' to face one man? An' then I'd hearn no end about Mr. Collister, an' some of it was funny, an' thar wa'n't none of it very bad; so I jus' made up my mind to come round hyar an' see for myse'f what like he was. You see," she went on, with a lift of the head, "it was for the money, but it was for the honourableness, too; an' I'd cross my heart an' swear to you on the Bible that when I come hyar I hadn't no thought that anybody could think it was onder-reachin' Mr. Collister. I thought he'd be right proud, an' before we got to talking I never sensed that it would be a hard thing to name to him; but now——" her voice trembled and broke. "Oh," she cried, "I wished I'd never come!"

The man looked away from her. "Don't wish it," he said huskily. "Collister ought to be proud if he can have you for his wife; and he would give you a good home and everything your heart could ask for."

Tears sprang from her eyes, and she dropped her head upon her knees to hide them. "Oh, I know, I know," she sobbed; "but I'd rather marry you!"

"O-oh!" breathed the man who worked for Collister; "I'd so much rather that you did." And with a laugh of pure delight he caught her up into his arms.

When they left the store a red blaze of sunset shone between the trunks of the pine trees. The man fastened the padlock behind them, and they started in a lovers' silence along the road. The big farm was as empty and as lifeless as ever, except for the lonesome neighing of a horse in the barnyard, and for a single straight blue thread of smoke which rose from one of the little houses. The girl pointed at it, and smiled.

"He's having to get his own supper to-night," she said, "but I'll make it up to him; I'll make his light bread jus' the same."

"Yes," he said, "you'd better; for, whatever he's been to other folks, he's always been good to me; an', please God, he's going to be mighty good to you."

A breath of land breeze had started in the pine woods, and was going out bearing a tribute of sweet odours to the sea. The disc of the sun sank below the black line etched against a crimson sky. Softly and faintly in the far distance some passing creole hailed another with a long sweet call. They reached the edge of the clearing, and went on through the deepening twilight of the pines. There were no words in all the world quite true enough to speak in that great murmurous stillness that was in the woods and in their hearts. At last they came to a path beyond which she would not let him go, thinking it better for this last time to go on alone.

"Good-night," she said lingeringly; and he held her close and kissed her, whispering good-night, then stood and watched her slender, swaying figure as it grew indistinct between the trees; and just before it vanished he called out guardedly.

"Say," he summoned, "come here!"

She went laughing back to him. "You-all *are* bigoty," she said, "beginning to order me about!"

He took her hands, and held her from him so that he could see her face. "You mustn't be mad at me," he said; "but there's something I forgot to tell you—I'm Collister."

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS
1864–1916

HOW HEFTY BURKE GOT EVEN

HEFTY BURKE was once clubbed by a policeman named M'Cluire, who excused the clubbing to His Honour by swearing that Hefty had been drunk and disorderly, which was not true. Hefty got away from the Island by swimming the East River, and swore to get even with the policeman. This story tells how he got even.

Mr. Carstairs was an artist who had made his first great success by painting figures and landscapes in Brittany. He had a studio at Fifty-eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, and was engaged on an historical subject in which there were three figures. One was a knight in full armour, and the other was a Moor, and the third was the figure of a woman. The suit of armour had been purchased by Mr. Carstairs in Paris, and was believed to have been worn by a brave nobleman, one of whose extravagant descendants had sold everything belonging to his family in order to get money with which to play baccarat. Carstairs was at the sale, and paid a large price for the suit of armour which the Marquis de Neuville had worn, and set it up in a corner of his studio. It was in eight or a dozen pieces, and quite heavy, but was wonderfully carved and inlaid with silver, and there were dents on it that showed where a Saracen's scimitar had been dulled and many a brave knight's spear had struck. Mr. Carstairs had paid so much for it that he thought he ought to make better use of it, if possible, than simply to keep it dusted and show it off to his friends. So he began his historical picture, and engaged Hefty Burke to pose as the knight and wear the armour. Hefty's features were not exactly the sort of features you would imagine a Marquis de Neuville would have ; but as his visor was down in the picture, it did not make much material difference; and as his figure was superb, he answered very well. Hefty drove an ice-waggon during business hours, and, as a personal favour to Mr. Carstairs, agreed to pose for him, for a consideration, two afternoons of each week, and to sleep in the studio at night, for it was filled with valuable things.

The armour was a never-ending source of amazement and bewilderment to Hefty. He could not understand why a man would wear such a suit, and especially when he went out to fight. It was the last thing in the world he would individually have selected in which to make war.

"Ef I was goin' to scrap wid anybody," he said to Mr. Carstairs, "I'd as lief tie meself up wid dumb-bells as take to carry all this stuff on me. A man wid a baseball bat and swimmin' tights on could dance all round youse and knock spots out of one of these things. The other lad wouldn't be in it. Why, before he could lift his legs or get his hands up you cud hit him on his helmet, and he wouldn't know what killed him. They must hev sat down to fight in them days."

Mr. Carstairs painted on in silence and smiled grimly.

"I'd like to have seen a go with the parties fixed out in a pair of these things," continued Hefty. "I'd bet on the lad that got in the first whack. He wouldn't have to do nothing but shove the other one over on his back and fall on him. Why, I guess this weighs half a ton if it weighs an ounce!"

For all his contempt Hefty had a secret admiration for the ancient marquis who had worn this suit, and had been strong enough to carry its weight and demolish his enemies besides. The marks on the armour interested him greatly, and he was very much impressed one day when he found what he declared to be blood-stains on the lining of the helmet.

"I guess the old feller that wore this was a sport, eh?" he said proudly, shaking the pieces on his arms until they rattled. "I guess he done 'em up pretty well for all these handicaps. I'll bet when he got to falling around on 'em and butting 'em with this fire helmet he made 'em purty tired. Don't youse think so?"

Young Carstairs said he didn't doubt it for a moment.

The Small Hours Social Club was to give a prize masquerade ball at the Palace Garden on New Year's Night, and Hefty had decided to go. Every gentleman dancer was to get a white silk badge with a gold tassel, and every committee-man received a blue badge with "Committee" written across it in brass letters. It cost three dollars to be a committee-man, but only one dollar "for self and lady." There were three prizes—one of a silver water-pitcher for the "handsomest-costumed lady dancer," an accordion for the "best-dressed

gent," and a cake for the most original idea in costume, whether worn by " gent or lady." Hefty, as well as many others, made up his mind to get the accordion, if it cost him as much as seven dollars, which was half of his week's wages. It wasn't the prize he wanted so much, but he thought of the impression it would make on Miss Casey, whose father was the well-known janitor of that name. They had been engaged for some time, but the engagement hung fire, and Hefty thought that a becoming and appropriate costume might hasten matters a little. He was undecided as to whether he should go as an Indian or as a courtier of the time of Charles II. Auchmuty Stein, of the Bowery, who supplies costumes and wigs at reasonable rates, was of the opinion that a neat sailor suit of light blue silk and decorated with white anchors was about the " prettiest thing in the shop, and sheap at fife dollars " ; but Hefty said he never saw a sailor in silk yet, and he didn't think they ever wore it. He couldn't see how they could keep the tar and salt water from ruining it.

The Charles II. Court suit was very handsome, and consisted of red cotton tights, blue velveteen doublet, and a blue cloak lined with pale pink silk. A yellow wig went with this, and a jewelled sword which would not come out of the scabbard. It could be had for seven dollars a night. Hefty was still in doubt about it, and was much perplexed. Auchmuty Stein told him Charlie Macklin, the Third Avenue ticket-chopper, was after the same suit, and that he had better take it while he could get it. But Hefty said he'd think about it. The next day was his day for posing, and as he stood arrayed in the Marquis de Neuville's suit of mail he chanced to see himself in one of the long mirrors, and was for the first time so struck with the ferocity of his appearance that he determined to see if old man Stein had not a suit of imitation armour which would not be so heavy and would look as well. But the more Hefty thought of it, the more he believed that only the real suit would do. Its associations, its blood-stains, and the real silver tracings haunted him, and he half decided to ask Mr. Carstairs to lend it to him.

But then he remembered overhearing Carstairs tell a brother artist that he had paid two thousand francs for it, and though he did not know how much a franc might be, two thousand of anything was too much to wear around at a masquerade ball. But the thing haunted him. He was sure if Miss Casey saw him in that suit she would never look at Charlie Macklin again.

"They wouldn't be in the same town with me," said Hefty. "And I'd get two of the prizes, sure."

He was in great perplexity, when good luck or bad luck settled it for him.

"Burke," said Mr. Carstairs, "Mrs. Carstairs and I are going out of town for New Year's Day, and will be gone until Sunday. Take a turn through the rooms each night, will you? as well as the studio, and see that everything is all right." That clinched the matter for Hefty. He determined to go as far as the Palace Garden as the Marquis de Neuville, and say nothing whatever to Mr. Carstairs about it.

Stuff M'Govern, who drove a night-hawk, and who was a particular admirer of Hefty's, even though as a cabman he was in a higher social scale than the driver of an ice-cart, agreed to carry Hefty and his half-ton of armour to the Garden, and call for him when the ball was over.

"Holee smoke!" gasped Mr. M'Govern, as Hefty stumbled heavily across the pavement with an overcoat over his armour and his helmet under his arm. "Do you expect to do much dancing in that sheet-iron?"

"It's the looks of the thing I'm gambling on," said Hefty. "I look like a locomotive when I get this stove-pipe on me head."

Hefty put on his helmet in the cab and pulled down the visor, and when he alighted the crowd around the door was too greatly awed to jeer, but stood silent with breathless admiration. He had great difficulty in mounting the somewhat steep flight of stairs which led to the dancing-room, and considered gloomily that in the event of a fire he would have a very small chance of getting out alive. He made so much noise coming up that the committee-men thought some one was rolling some one else down the stairs, and came out to see the fight. They observed Hefty's approach with whispered awe and amusement.

"Wot are you?" asked the man at the door. "Youse needn't give your real name," he explained politely. "But you've got to give something if youse are trying for a prize, see?"

"I'm the Black Knight," said Hefty in a hoarse voice, "the Marquis de Newveal; and when it comes to scrappin' wid der perlice, I'm de best in der business."

This last statement was entirely impromptu, and inspired by the

presence of Policeman M'Cluire, who, with several others, had been detailed to keep order. M'Cluire took this challenge calmly, and looked down and smiled at Hefty's feet.

" He looks like a stove on two legs," he said to the crowd. The crowd, as a matter of policy, laughed.

" You'll look like a fool standing on his head in a snow-bank if you talk impudent to me," said Hefty epigrammatically, from behind the barrier of his iron mask. What might have happened next did not happen, because at that moment the music sounded for the grand march, and Hefty and the policeman were swept apart by the crowd of Indians, Mexicans, courtiers, negro minstrels, and clowns. Hefty stamped across the waxed floor about as lightly as a safe could do it if a safe could walk. He found Miss Casey after the march and disclosed his identity. She promised not to tell, and was plainly delighted and flattered at being seen with the distinct sensation of the ball. " Say, Hefty," she said, " they just ain't in it with you. You'll take the two prizes sure. How do I look ? "

" Out o' sight," said Hefty. " Never saw you lookin' better."

" That's good," said Miss Casey simply, and with a sigh of satisfaction.

Hefty was undoubtedly a great success. The men came around him and pawed him, and felt the dents in the armour, and tried the weight of it by holding up one of his arms, and handled him generally as though he were a freak in a museum. " Let 'em alone," said Hefty to Miss Casey ; " I'm not sayin' a word. Let the judges get on to the sensation I'm a-makin', and I'll walk off with the prizes. The crowd is wid me sure."

At midnight the judges pounded on a table for order, and announced that after much debate they gave the first prize to Miss Lizzie Cannon, of Hester Street, for " having the most handsomest costume on the floor, that of Columbia." The fact that Mr. " Buck " Masters, who was one of the judges, and who was engaged to Miss Cannon, had said that he would pound things out of the other judges if they gave the prize elsewhere was not known, but the decision met with as general satisfaction as could well be expected.

" The second prize," said the judges, " goes to the gent calling himself the Black Knight—him in the iron leggings—and the other prize for the most original costume goes to him too." Half the crowd cheered at this and only one man hissed. Hefty, filled with

joy and with the anticipation of the elegance the ice-pitcher would lend to his flat when he married Miss Casey, and how conveniently he could fill it, turned on this gentleman and told him that only geese hissed.

The gentleman, who had spent much time on his costume, and who had been assured by each judge on each occasion that evening when he had treated him to beer that he would get the prize, told Hefty to go lie down. It has never been explained just what horrible insult lies back of this advice, but it is a very dangerous thing to tell a gentleman to do. Hefty lifted one foot heavily and bore down on the disappointed masker like an ironclad in a heavy sea. But before he could reach him, Policeman M'Cluire, mindful of the insult put upon him by this stranger, sprang between them and said, " Here now, no scrapping here; get out of this," and shoved Hefty back with his hand. Hefty uttered a mighty howl of wrath and long-cherished anger, and lurched forward, but before he could reach his old-time enemy three policemen had him around the arms and by the leg, and he was as effectually stopped as though he had been chained to the floor.

" Let go o' me ! " said Hefty wildly. " You're smotherin' me. Give me a fair chance at him."

But they would not give him any sort of a chance. They rushed him down the steep stairs, and while M'Cluire ran ahead two more pushed back the crowd that had surged uncertainly forward to the rescue. If Hefty had declared his identity the police would have had a very sad time of it; but that he must not get Mr. Carstairs' two-thousand-franc suit into trouble was all that filled Hefty's mind, and all that he wanted was to escape. Three policemen walked with him down the street. They said they knew where he lived, and that they were only going to take him home. They said this because they were afraid the crowd would interfere if it imagined Hefty was being led to the precinct station-house.

But Hefty knew where he was going as soon as he turned the next corner and was started off in the direction of the station-house. There was still quite a small crowd at his heels, and Stuff M'Govern was driving along at the side anxious to help, but fearful to do anything, as Hefty had told him not to let any one know who his fare had been and that his incognito must be preserved.

The blood rushed to Hefty's head like hot liquor. To be arrested

for nothing, and by that thing M'Cluire, and to have the noble coat-of-mail of the Marquis de Neuville locked up in a dirty cell and probably ruined, and to lose his position with Carstairs, who had always treated him so well, it was terrible! It could not be! He looked through his visor; to the right and to the left a policeman walked on each side of him with his hand on his iron sleeve, and M'Cluire marched proudly before. The dim lamps of M'Govern's night-hawk shone at the side of the procession and showed the crowd trailing on behind. Suddenly Hefty threw up his visor. "Stuff," he cried, "are youse with me?"

He did not wait for any answer, but swung back his two iron arms and then brought them forward with a sweep on to the back of the necks of the two policemen. They went down and forward as if a lamp-post had fallen on them, but were up again in a second. But before they could rise Hefty set his teeth, and with a gurgle of joy butted his iron helmet into M'Cluire's back and sent him flying forward into a snow-bank. Then he threw himself on him and buried him under three hundred pounds of iron and flesh and blood, and beat him with his mailed hand over the head and choked the snow and ice down into his throat and nostrils.

"You'll club me again, will you?" he cried. "You'll send me to the Island?" The two policemen were pounding him with their night-sticks as effectually as though they were rapping on a door-step; and the crowd, seeing this, fell on them from behind, led by Stuff M'Govern with his whip, and rolled them in the snow and tried to tear off their coat-tails, which means money out of the policeman's own pocket for repairs, and hurts more than broken ribs, as the Police Benefit Society pays for them.

"Now then, boys, get me into a cab," cried Hefty. They lifted him in, and obligingly blew out the lights so that the police could not see its number, and Stuff drove Hefty proudly home.

"I guess I'm even with that cop now," said Hefty, as he stood at the door of the studio building perspiring and happy; "but if them cops ever find out who the Black Knight was, I'll go away for six months on the Island. I guess," he added thoughtfully, "I'll have to give them two prizes up."

A RECRUIT AT CHRISTMAS

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

YOUNG Lieutenant Claflin left the Brooklyn Navy Yard at an early hour, and arrived at the recruiting office at ten o'clock. It was the day before Christmas, and even the Bowery, "the thieves' highway," had taken on the emblems and spirit of the season, and the young officer smiled grimly as he saw a hard-faced proprietor of a saloon directing the hanging of wreaths and crosses over the door of his palace and telling the assistant barkeeper to make the red holly berries "show up" better.

The cheap lodging-houses had trailed the green over their illuminated transoms, and even on Mott Street the Chinamen had hung up strings of evergreen over the doors of the joss-house and the gambling-house next door. And the tramps and good-for-nothings, just back from the Island, had an animated, expectant look, as though something certainly was going to happen.

Lieutenant Claflin nodded to Corporal Goddard at the door of the recruiting office, and startled that veteran's rigidity, and kept his cotton-gloved hand at his visor longer than the Regulations required, by saying, "Wish you merry Christmas," as he jumped up the stairs.

The recruiting office was a dull, blank-looking place, the view from the windows was not inspiring, and the sight of the plump and black-eyed Jewess in front of the pawnshop across the street, who was a vision of delight to Corporal Goddard, had no attractions to the officer upstairs. He put on his blue jacket, with the black braid down the front, lighted a cigar, and wrote letters on every other than official matters, and forgot about recruits. He was to have leave of absence on Christmas, and though the others had denounced him for leaving the mess table on that day, they had forgiven him when he explained that he was going to spend it with his people at home. The others had homes as far away as San Francisco and as far inland as Milwaukee, and some called the big ship of war home; but Claflin's people lived up in Connecticut, and he could reach them in a few hours. He was a very lucky man, the others said, and he

felt very cheerful over it, and forgot the blank-looking office with its Rules and Regulations, and coloured prints of uniforms, and models of old warships, and tin boxes of official documents which were to be filled out and sent to "the Honourable, the Secretary of the Navy."

Corporal Goddard on the stoop below shifted from one foot to the other, and chafed his gloved hands softly together to keep them warm. He had no time to write letters on unofficial writing paper, nor to smoke cigars or read novels with his feet on a chair, with the choice of looking out at the queer stream of human life moving by below the window on the opposite side of the Bowery. He had to stand straight, which came easily to him now, and to answer questions and urge doubtful minds to join the ranks of the government's marines.

A drunken man gazed at Ogden's coloured pictures of the American infantry, cavalry, and marine uniforms that hung before the door, and placed an unsteady finger on the cavalryman's picture, and said he chose to be one of those. Corporal Goddard told him severely to be off and get sober and grow six inches before he thought of such a thing, and frowned him off the stoop.

Then two boys from the country asked about the service, and went off very quickly when they found they would have to remain in it for three years at least. A great many more stopped in front of the gay pictures and gazed admiringly at Corporal Goddard's bright brass buttons and brilliant complexion, which they innocently attributed to exposure to the sun on long, weary marches. But no one came to offer himself in earnest. At one o'clock Lieutenant Claflin changed his coat and went down town to luncheon, and came back still more content and in feeling with the season, and lighted another cigar.

But just as he had settled himself comfortably, he heard Corporal Goddard's step on the stairs and a less determined step behind him. He took his feet down from the rung of the other chair, pulled his undress jacket into place, and took up a pen.

Corporal Goddard saluted at the door and introduced with a wave of his hand the latest applicant for Uncle Sam's service. The applicant was as young as Lieutenant Claflin, and as good-looking; but he was dirty and unshaven, and his eyes were set back in the sockets, and his fingers twitched at his side. Lieutenant Claflin had

seen many applicants in this stage. He called it the remorseful stage, and was used to it.

"Name?" said Lieutenant Claflin, as he pulled a printed sheet of paper towards him.

The applicant hesitated, then he said—

"Walker—John Walker."

The lieutenant noticed the hesitation, but he merely remarked to himself, "It's none of my business," and added, aloud, "Nationality?" and wrote United States before the applicant answered.

The applicant said he was unmarried, was twenty-three years old, and had been born in New York city. Even Corporal Goddard knew this last was not so, but it was none of his business, either. He moved the applicant up against the wall under the measuring rod, and brought it down on his head.

So he measured and weighed the applicant, and tested his eyesight with printed letters and bits of coloured yarn, and the lieutenant kept tally on the sheet, and bit the end of his pen and watched the applicant's face. There were a great many applicants, and few were chosen; but none of them had quite the air about him which this one had. Lieutenant Claflin thought Corporal Goddard was just a bit too callous in the way he handled the applicant, and too peremptory in his questions; but he could not tell why Corporal Goddard treated them all in that way. Then the young officer noticed that the applicant's white face was flushing, and that he bit his lips when Corporal Goddard pushed him towards the weighing machine as he would have moved a barrel of flour.

"You'll answer," said Lieutenant Claflin, glancing at the sheet. "Your average is very good. All you've got to do now is to sign this, and then it will be over." But he did not let go of the sheet in his hand, as he would have done had he wanted it over. Neither did the applicant move forward to sign.

"After you have signed this," said the young officer, keeping his eyes down on the paper before him, "you will have become a servant of the United States; you will sit in that other room until the office is closed for to-day, and then you will be led over to the Navy Yard and put into a uniform, and from that time on for three years you will have a number, the same number as the one on your musket. You and the musket will both belong to the government.

You will clean and load the musket, and fight with it if God ever gives us the chance; and the government will feed you and keep you clean, and fight with you if needful."

The lieutenant looked up at the corporal and said, "You can go, Goddard," and the corporal turned on his heel and walked downstairs, wondering.

"You may spend the three years," continued the officer, still without looking at the applicant, "which are the best years of a young man's life, on the sea, visiting foreign ports, or you may spend it marching up and down the Brooklyn Navy Yard and cleaning brass work. There are some men who are meant to clean brass work and to march up and down in front of a stone arsenal, and who are fitted for nothing else. But to every man is given something which should tell him that he is put here to make the best of himself. Every man has that, even the men who are only fit to clean brass rods; but some men kill it, or try to kill it, in different ways, generally by rum. And they are as generally successful, if they keep the process up long enough. The government, of which I am a very humble representative, is always glad to get good men to serve her, but it seems to me (and I may be wrong, and I'm quite sure that I am speaking contrary to Regulations) that some of her men can serve her better in other ways than swabbing down decks. Now, you know yourself best. It may be that you are just the sort of man to stand up and salute the ladies when they come on board to see the ship, and to watch them from for'ard as they walk about with the officers. You won't be allowed to speak to them; you will be Number 329 or 328, and whatever benefits a good woman can give a man will be shut off from you, more or less, for three years.

"And, on the other hand, it may be that there are some good women who could keep you on shore, and help you to do something more with yourself than to carry a musket. And, again, it may be that if you stayed on shore you would drink yourself more or less comfortably to death, and break somebody's heart. I can't tell. But if I were not a commissioned officer of the United States, and a thing of Rules and Regulations who can dance and wear a uniform, and a youth generally unfit to pose as an example, I would advise you not to sign this, but to go home and brace up and leave whisky alone.

"Now, what shall we do?" said the young lieutenant, smiling; "shall we tear this up, or will you sign it?"

The applicant's lips were twitching as well as his hands now, and he rubbed his cuff over his face and smiled back.

"I'm much obliged to you," he said nervously. "That sounds a rather flat thing to say, I know, but if you knew all I meant by it, though, it would mean enough. I've made a damned fool of myself in this city, but nothing worse. And it was a choice of the navy, where they'd keep me straight, or going to the devil my own way. But it won't be my own way now, thanks to you. I don't know how you saw how it was so quickly; but, you see, I have got a home back in Connecticut, and women that can help me there, and I'll go back to them and ask them to let me start in again where I was when I went away."

"That's good," said the young officer cheerfully; "that's the way to talk. Tell me where you live in Connecticut, and I'll lend you the car fare to get there. I'll expect it back with interest, you know," he said, laughing.

"Thank you," said the rejected applicant. "It's not so far but that I can walk, and I don't think you'd believe in me if I took money."

"Oh, yes, I would," said the lieutenant. "How much do you want?"

"Thank you, but I'd rather walk," said the other. "I can get there easily enough by to-morrow. I'll be a nice Christmas present, won't I?" he added grimly.

"You'll do," said the young officer. "I fancy you'll be about as welcome a one as they'll get." He held out his hand and the other shook it, and walked out with his shoulders as stiff as those of Corporal Goddard.

Then he came back and looked into the room shyly. "I say," he said hesitatingly. The lieutenant ran his hand down into his pocket. "You've changed your mind?" he asked eagerly. "That's good. How much will you want?"

The rejected applicant flushed. "No, not that," he said. "I just came back to say—wish you a merry Christmas."

"O. HENRY"
(William Sydney Porter)
1862–1910

THE TRIMMED LAMP

OF course there are two sides to the question. Let us look at the other. We often hear "shop-girls" spoken of. No such persons exist. There are girls who work in shops. They make their living that way. But why turn their occupation into an adjective? Let us be fair. We do not refer to the girls who live on Fifth Avenue as "marriage-girls."

Lou and Nancy were chums. They came to the big city to find work because there was not enough to eat at their homes to go around. Nancy was nineteen; Lou was twenty. Both were pretty, active, country girls who had no ambition to go on the stage.

The little cherub that sits up aloft guided them to a cheap and respectable boarding-house. Both found positions and became wage-earners. They remained chums. It is at the end of six months that I would beg you to step forward and be introduced to them. Meddlesome Reader: My Lady Friends, Miss Nancy and Miss Lou. While you are shaking hands please take notice—cautiously—of their attire. Yes, cautiously; for they are as quick to resent a stare as a lady in a box at the horse show is.

Lou is a piece-work ironer in a hand laundry. She is clothed in a badly-fitting purple dress, and her hat plume is four inches too long; but her ermine muff and scarf cost $25, and its fellow beasts will be ticketed in the windows at $7.98 before the season is over. Her cheeks are pink, and her light-blue eyes bright. Contentment radiates from her.

Nancy you would call a shop-girl—because you have the habit. There is no type; but a perverse generation is always seeking a type; so this is what the type should be. She has the high-ratted pompadour, and the exaggerated straight-front. Her skirt is shoddy, but has the correct flair. No furs protect her against the bitter spring air, but she wears her short broadcloth jacket as jauntily as though it were Persian lamb! On her face and in her eyes, remorseless type-seeker, is the typical shop-girl expression. It is a look of silent

but contemptuous revolt against cheated womanhood; of sad prophecy of the vengeance to come. When she laughs her loudest the look is still there. The same look can be seen in the eyes of Russian peasants; and those of us left will see it some day on Gabriel's face when he comes to blow us up. It is a look that should wither and abash man; but he has been known to smirk at it and offer flowers—with a string tied to them.

Now lift your hat and come away, while you receive Lou's cheery "See you again," and the sardonic, sweet smile of Nancy that seems, somehow, to miss you and go fluttering like a white moth up over the house-tops to the stars.

The two waited on the corner for Dan. Dan was Lou's steady company. Faithful? Well he was on hand when Mary would have had to hire a dozen subpœna servers to find her lamb.

"Ain't you cold, Nance?" said Lou. "Say, what a chump you are for working in that old store for $8 a week! I made $18.50 last week. Of course ironing ain't as swell work as selling lace behind a counter, but it pays. None of us ironers make less than $10. And I don't know that it's any less respectful work, either."

"You can have it," said Nancy, with uplifted nose. "I'll take my eight a week and hall bedroom. I like to be among nice things and swell people. And look what a chance I've got! Why, one of our glove girls married a Pittsburg—steel maker, or blacksmith, or something—the other day worth a million dollars. I'll catch a swell myself some time. I ain't bragging on my looks or anything; but I'll take my chances where there's big prizes offered. What show would a girl have in a laundry?"

"Why, that's where I met Dan," said Lou triumphantly. "He came in for his Sunday shirt and collars and saw me at the first board, ironing. We all try to get to work at the first board. Ella Maginnis was sick that day, and I had her place. He said he noticed my arms first, how round and white they was. I had my sleeves rolled up. Some nice fellows come into laundries. You can tell 'em by their bringing their clothes in suit-cases, and turning in the door sharp and sudden."

"How can you wear a waist like that, Lou?" said Nancy, gazing down at the offending article with sweet scorn in her heavy-lidded eyes. "It shows fierce taste."

"This waist?" cried Lou, with wide-eyed indignation. "Why,

I paid $16 for this waist. It's worth twenty-five. A woman left it to be laundered, and never called for it. The boss sold it to me. It's got yards and yards of hand embroidery on it. Better talk about that ugly, plain thing you've got on."

"This ugly, plain thing," said Nancy calmly, "was copied from one that Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher was wearing. The girls say her bill in the store last year was $12,000. I made mine myself. It cost me $1.50. Ten feet away you couldn't tell it from hers."

"Oh, well," said Lou good-naturedly, "if you want to starve and put on airs, go ahead. But I'll take my job and good wages; and after hours give me something as fancy and attractive to wear as I am able to buy."

But just then Dan came—a serious young man with a ready-made necktie, who had escaped the city's brand of frivolity—an electrician earning $30 per week who looked upon Lou with the sad eyes of Romeo, and thought her embroidered waist a web in which any fly should delight to be caught.

"My friend, Mr. Owens—shake hands with Miss Danforth," said Lou.

"I'm mighty glad to know you, Miss Danforth," said Dan, with outstretched hand. "I've heard Lou speak of you so often."

"Thanks," said Nancy, touching his fingers with the tips of her cool ones, "I've heard her mention you—a few times."

Lou giggled.

"Did you get that handshake from Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher, Nance?" she asked.

"If I did, you can feel safe in copying it," said Nancy.

"Oh, I couldn't use it at all. It's too stylish for me. It's intended to set off diamond rings, that high shake is. Wait till I get a few and then I'll try it."

"Learn it first," said Nancy wisely, "and you'll be more likely to get the rings."

"Now, to settle this argument," said Dan with his ready, cheerful smile, "let me make a proposition. As I can't take both of you up to Tiffany's and do the right thing, what do you say to a little vaudeville? I've got the tickets. How about looking at stage diamonds since we can't shake hands with the real sparklers?"

The faithful squire took his place close to the curb; Lou next, a little peacocky in her bright and pretty clothes; Nancy on the

inside, slender, and soberly clothed as the sparrow, but with the true Van Alstyne Fisher walk—thus they set out for their evening's moderate diversion.

I do not suppose that many look upon a great department store as an educational institution. But the one in which Nancy worked was something like that to her. She was surrounded by beautiful things that breathed of taste and refinement. If you live in an atmosphere of luxury, luxury is yours whether your money pays for it, or another's.

The people she served were mostly women whose dress, manners, and position in the social world were quoted as criterions. From them Nancy began to take toll—the best from each according to her view.

From one she would copy and practise a gesture, from another an eloquent lifting of an eyebrow, from others, a manner of walking, of carrying a purse, of smiling, of greeting a friend, of addressing "inferiors in station." From her best beloved model, Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher, she made requisition for that excellent thing, a soft, low voice as clear as silver and as perfect in articulation as the notes of a thrush. Suffused in the aura of this high social refinement and good breeding, it was impossible for her to escape a deeper effect of it. As good habits are said to be better than good principles, so, perhaps, good manners are better than good habits. The teachings of your parents may not keep alive your New England conscience; but if you sit on a straight-back chair and repeat the words "prisms and pilgrims" forty times the devil will flee from you. And when Nancy spoke in the Van Alstyne Fisher tones she felt the thrill of *noblesse oblige* to her very bones.

There was another source of learning in the great departmental school. Whenever you see three or four shop-girls gather in a bunch and jingle their wire bracelets as an accompaniment to apparently frivolous conversation, do not think that they are there for the purpose of criticising the way Ethel does her back hair. The meeting may lack the dignity of the deliberate bodies of man; but it has all the importance of the occasion on which Eve and her first daughter first put their heads together to make Adam understand his proper place in the household. It is Woman's Conference for Common Defence and Exchange of Strategical Theories of Attack and Repulse upon and against the World, which is a Stage, and Man, its Audience who Persists in Throwing Bouquets Thereupon. Woman, the most help-

less of the young of any animal—with the fawn's grace but without its fleetness ; with the bird's beauty but without its power of flight ; with the honey-bee's burden of sweetness but without its—Oh, let's drop that simile—some of us may have been stung.

During this council of war they pass weapons one to another, and exchange stratagems that each has devised and formulated out of the tactics of life.

" I says to 'im," says Sadie, " ain't you the fresh thing ! Who do you suppose I am, to be addressing such a remark to me ? And what do you think he says back to me ? "

The heads, brown, black, flaxen, red, and yellow bob together ; the answer is given ; and the parry to the thrust is decided upon, to be used by each thereafter in passages-at-arms with the common enemy, man.

Thus Nancy learned the art of defence ; and to women successful defence means victory.

The curriculum of a department store is a wide one. Perhaps no other college could have fitted her as well for her life's ambition—the drawing of a matrimonial prize.

Her station in the store was a favoured one. The music-room was near enough for her to hear and become familiar with the works of the best composers—at least to acquire the familiarity that passed for appreciation in the social world in which she was vaguely trying to set a tentative and aspiring foot. She absorbed the educating influence of art wares, of costly and dainty fabrics, of adornments that are almost culture to women.

The other girls soon became aware of Nancy's ambition. " Here comes your millionaire, Nance," they would call to her whenever any man who looked the rôle approached her counter. It got to be a habit of men, who were hanging about while their women-folk were shopping, to stroll over to the handkerchief counter and dawdle over the cambric squares. Nancy's imitation high-bred air and genuine dainty beauty was what attracted. Many men thus came to display their graces before her. Some of them may have been millionaires ; others were certainly no more than their sedulous apes. Nancy learned to discriminate. There was a window at the end of the handkerchief counter ; and she could see the rows of vehicles waiting for the shoppers in the street below. She looked, and perceived that automobiles differ as well as do their owners.

Once a fascinating gentleman bought four dozen handkerchiefs, and wooed her across the counter with a King Cophetua air. When he had gone, one of the girls said:

"What's wrong, Nance, that you didn't warm up to that fellow? He looks the swell article, all right, to me."

"Him?" said Nancy, with her coolest, sweetest, most impersonal, Van Alstyne Fisher smile; "not for mine. I saw him drive up outside. A 12 H.P. machine and an Irish chauffeur! And you saw what kind of handkerchiefs he bought—silk! And he's got dactylis on him. Give me the real thing or nothing, if you please."

Two of the most "refined" women in the store—a forelady and a cashier—had a few "swell gentlemen friends" with whom they now and then dined. Once they included Nancy in an invitation. The dinner took place in a spectacular café whose tables are engaged for New Year's Eve a year in advance. There were two "gentlemen friends"—one without any hair on his head—high living ungrew it; and we can prove it — the other a young man whose worth and sophistication he impressed upon you in two convincing ways—he swore that all the wine was corked; and he wore diamond cuff buttons. This young man perceived irresistible excellences in Nancy. His taste ran to shop-girls; and here was one that added the voice and manner of his high social world to the franker charms of her own caste. So, on the following day, he appeared in the store and made her a serious proposal of marriage over a box of hem-stitched, grass-bleached Irish linens. Nancy declined. A brown pompadour ten feet away had been using her eyes and ears. When the rejected suitor had gone she heaped carboys of upbraidings and horror upon Nancy's head.

"What a terrible little fool you are! That fellow's a millionaire—he's a nephew of old Van Skittles himself. And he was talking on the level, too. Have you gone crazy, Nance?"

"Have I?" said Nancy. "I didn't take him, did I? He isn't a millionaire so hard that you could notice it, anyhow. His family only allows him $20,000 a year to spend. The bald-headed fellow was guying him about it the other night at supper."

The brown pompadour came nearer and narrowed her eyes.

"Say, what do you want?" she inquired, in a voice hoarse for lack of chewing-gum. "Ain't that enough for you? Do you want to be a Mormon, and marry Rockefeller and Gladstone Dowie and the

King of Spain and the whole bunch? Ain't $20,000 a year good enough for you?"

Nancy flushed a little under the level gaze of the black, shallow eyes.

"It wasn't altogether the money, Carrie," she explained. "His friend caught him in a rank lie the other night at dinner. It was about some girl he said he hadn't been to the theatre with. Well, I can't stand a liar. Put everything together—I don't like him; and that settles it. When I sell out it's not going to be on any bargain day. I've got to have something that sits up in a chair like a man, anyhow. Yes, I'm looking out for a catch; but it's got to be able to do something more than make a noise like a toy bank."

"The physiopathic ward for yours!" said the brown pompadour, walking away.

These high ideas, if not ideals—Nancy continued to cultivate on $8 per week. She bivouacked on the trail of the great unknown "catch," eating her dry bread and tightening her belt day by day. On her face was the faint, soldierly, sweet grim smile of the predestined man-hunter. The store was her forest; and many times she raised her rifle at game that seemed broad-antlered and big; but always some deep unerring instinct—perhaps of the huntress, perhaps of the woman—made her hold her fire and take up the trail again.

Lou flourished in the laundry. Out of her $18.50 per week she paid $6 for her room and board. The rest went mainly for clothes. Her opportunities for bettering her taste and manners were few compared with Nancy's. In the steaming laundry there was nothing but work, work and her thoughts of the evening pleasures to come. Many costly and showy fabrics passed under her iron; and it may be that her growing fondness for dress was thus transmitted to her through the conducting metal.

When the day's work was over Dan awaited her outside, her faithful shadow in whatever light she stood.

Sometimes he cast an honest and troubled glance at Lou's clothes that increased in conspicuity rather than in style; but this was no disloyalty; he deprecated the attention they called to her in the streets.

And Lou was no less faithful to her chum. There was a law that Nancy should go with them on whatsoever outings they might take. Dan bore the extra burden heartily and in good cheer. It might be said that Lou furnished the colour, Nancy the tone, and Dan the

weight of the distraction-seeking trio. The escort, in his neat but obviously ready-made suit, his ready-made tie and unfailing, genial, ready-made wit never startled or clashed. He was of that good kind that you are likely to forget while they are present, but remember distinctly after they are gone.

To Nancy's superior taste the flavour of these ready-made pleasures was sometimes a little bitter: but she was young; and youth is a gourmand, when it cannot be a gourmet.

"Dan is always wanting me to marry him right away," Lou told her once. "But why should I? I'm independent. I can do as I please with the money I earn; and he never would agree for me to keep on working afterward. And say, Nance, what do you want to stick to that old store for, and half starve and half dress yourself? I could get you a place in the laundry right now if you'd come. It seems to me that you could afford to be a little less stuck-up if you could make a good deal more money."

"I don't think I'm stuck-up, Lou," said Nancy, "but I'd rather live on half-rations and stay where I am. I suppose I've got the habit. It's the chance that I want. I don't expect to be always behind a counter. I'm learning something new every day. I'm right up against refined and rich people all the time—even if I do only wait on them; and I'm not missing any pointers that I see passing around."

"Caught your millionaire yet?" asked Lou, with her teasing laugh.

"I haven't selected one yet," answered Nancy. "I've been looking them over."

"Goodness! the idea of picking over 'em! Don't you ever let one get by you, Nance—even if he's a few dollars shy. But of course you're joking—millionaires don't think about working girls like us."

"It might be better for them if they did," said Nancy, with cool wisdom. "Some of us could teach them how to take care of their money."

"If one was to speak to me," laughed Lou, "I know I'd have a duck-fit."

"That's because you don't know any. The only difference between swells and other people is you have to watch 'em closer. Don't you think that red silk lining is just a little bit too bright for that coat, Lou?"

Lou looked at the plain, dull olive jacket of her friend.

"Well, no, I don't—but it may seem so beside that faded-looking thing you've got on."

"This jacket," said Nancy complacently, "has exactly the cut and fit of one that Mrs. Van Alstyne Fisher was wearing the other day. The material cost me $3.98. I suppose hers cost about $100 more."

"Oh, well," said Lou lightly, "it don't strike me as millionaire bait. Shouldn't wonder if I catch one before you do, anyway."

Truly it would have taken a philosopher to decide upon the values of the theories held by the two friends. Lou, lacking that certain pride and fastidiousness that keeps stores and desks filled with girls working for the barest living, thumped away gaily with her iron in the noisy and stifling laundry. Her wages supported her even beyond the point of comfort; so that her dress profited until sometimes she cast a sidelong glance of impatience at the neat but inelegant apparel of Dan—Dan the constant, the immutable, the undeviating.

As for Nancy, her case was one of tens of thousands. Silk and jewels and laces and ornaments and the perfume and music of the fine world of good-breeding and taste—these were made for woman; they are her equitable portion. Let her keep near them if they are a part of life to her, and if she will. She is no traitor to herself, as Esau was; for she keeps her birthright, and the pottage she earns is often very scant.

In this atmosphere Nancy belonged; and she throve in it and ate her frugal meals and schemed over her cheap dresses with a determined and contented mind. She already knew woman; and she was studying man, the animal, both as to his habits and eligibility. Some day she would bring down the game that she wanted; but she promised herself it would be what seemed to her the biggest and the best, and nothing smaller.

Thus she kept her lamp trimmed and burning to receive the bridegroom when he should come.

But, another lesson she learned, perhaps unconsciously. Her standard of values began to shift and change. Sometimes the dollar-mark grew blurred in her mind's eye, and shaped itself into letters that spelled such words as "truth" and "honour" and now and then just "kindness." Let us make a likeness of one who hunts the moose or elk in some mighty wood. He sees a little dell, mossy and

embowered, where a rill trickles, babbling to him of rest and comfort. At these times the spear of Nimrod himself grows blunt.

So Nancy wondered sometimes if Persian lamb was always quoted at its market value by the hearts that it covered.

One Thursday evening Nancy left the store and turned across Sixth Avenue westward to the laundry. She was expected to go with Lou and Dan to a musical comedy.

Dan was just coming out of the laundry when she arrived. There was a queer strained look on his face.

"I thought I would drop around to see if they had heard from her," he said.

"Heard from who?" asked Nancy. "Isn't Lou there?"

"I thought you knew," said Dan. "She hasn't been here or at the house where she lived since Monday. She moved all her things from there. She told one of the girls in the laundry she might be going to Europe."

"Hasn't anybody seen her anywhere?" asked Nancy.

Dan looked at her with his jaws set grimly and a steely gleam in his steady grey eyes.

"They told me in the laundry," he said harshly, "that they saw her pass yesterday—in an automobile. With one of the millionaires, I suppose, that you and Lou were for ever busying your brains about."

For the first time Nancy quailed before a man. She laid her hand, that trembled slightly, on Dan's sleeve.

"You've no right to say such a thing to me, Dan—as if I had anything to do with it!"

"I didn't mean it that way," said Dan, softening. He fumbled in his vest pocket.

"I've got the tickets for the show to-night," he said, with a gallant show of lightness. "If you——"

Nancy admired pluck whenever she saw it.

"I'll go with you, Dan," she said.

Three months went by before Nancy saw Lou again.

At twilight one evening the shop-girl was hurrying home along the border of a little quiet park. She heard her name called, and wheeled about in time to catch Lou rushing into her arms.

After the first embrace they drew their heads back as serpents do, ready to attack or to charm, with a thousand questions trembling on their swift tongues. And then Nancy noticed that prosperity

had descended upon Lou, manifesting itself in costly furs, flashing gems, and creations of the tailor's art.

" You little fool ! " cried Lou, loudly and affectionately. " I see you are still working in that store, and as shabby as ever. And how about that big catch you were going to make—nothing doing yet, I suppose ? "

And then Lou looked, and saw that something better than prosperity had descended upon Nancy—something that shone brighter than gems in her eyes and redder than a rose in her cheeks, and that danced like electricity anxious to be loosed from the tip of her tongue.

" Yes, I'm still in the store," said Nancy, " but I'm going to leave it next week. I've made my catch—the biggest catch in the world. You won't mind now, Lou, will you ?—I'm going to be married to Dan—to Dan !—he's my Dan now—why, Lou ! "

Around the corner of the park strolled one of those new-crop, smooth-faced young policemen that are making the force more endurable—at least to the eye. He saw a woman with an expensive fur coat and diamond-ringed hands crouching down against the iron fence of the park, sobbing turbulently, while a slender, plainly dressed working girl leaned close, trying to console her. But the Gibsonian cop, being of the new order, passed on, pretending not to notice, for he was wise enough to know that these matters are beyond help, so far as the power he represents is concerned, though he rap the pavement with his nightstick till the sound goes up to the furthermost stars.

THE LAST OF THE TROUBADOURS

"O. Henry"

INEXORABLY Sam Galloway saddled his pony. He was going away from the Rancho Altito at the end of a three-months' visit. It is not to be expected that a guest should put up with wheat coffee and biscuits yellow-streaked with saleratus for longer than that. Nick Napoleon, the big Negro man cook, had never been able to make good biscuits. Once before, when Nick was cooking at the Willow Ranch, Sam had been forced to fly from his *cuisine*, after only a six-weeks' sojourn.

On Sam's face was an expression of sorrow, deepened with regret and slightly tempered by the patient forgiveness of a connoisseur who cannot be understood. But very firmly and inexorably he buckled his saddle-cinches, looped his stake-rope and hung it to his saddle-horn, tied his slicker and coat on the cantle, and looped his quirt on his right wrist. The Merrydews (householders of the Rancho Altito), men, women, children, and servants, vassals, visitors, employés, dogs, and casual callers were grouped in the "gallery" of the ranch house, all with faces set to the tune of melancholy and grief. For, as the coming of Sam Galloway to any ranch, camp, or cabin between the rivers Frio and Bravo del Norte aroused joy, so his departure caused mourning and distress.

And then, during absolute silence, except for the bumping of a hind elbow of a hound dog as he pursued a wicked flea, Sam tenderly and carefully tied his guitar across his saddle on top of his slicker and coat. The guitar was in a green duck bag; and if you catch the significance of it, it explains Sam.

Sam Galloway was the Last of the Troubadours. Of course you know about the troubadours. The encyclopædia says they flourished between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries. What they flourished doesn't seem clear—you may be pretty sure it wasn't a sword: maybe it was a fiddlebow, or a forkful of spaghetti, or a lady's scarf. Anyhow, Sam Galloway was one of 'em.

Sam put on a martyred expression as he mounted his pony. But

the expression on his face was hilarious compared with the one on his pony's. You see, a pony gets to know his rider mighty well, and it is not unlikely that cow ponies in pastures and at hitching racks had often guyed Sam's pony for being ridden by a guitar player instead of by a rollicking, cussing, all-wool cowboy. No man is a hero to his saddle-horse. And even an escalator in a department store might be excused for tripping up a troubadour.

Oh, I know I'm one ; and so are you. You remember the stories you memorise and the card tricks you study and that little piece on the piano—how does it go ?—ti-tum-te-tum-ti-tum—those little Arabian Ten Minute Entertainments that you furnish when you go up to call on your rich Aunt Jane. You should know that *omnæ personæ in tres partes divisæ sunt*, namely : Barons, Troubadours, and Workers. Barons have no inclination to read such folderol as this ; and Workers have no time : so I know you must be a Troubadour, and that you will understand Sam Galloway. Whether we sing, act, dance, write, lecture, or paint, we are only troubadours ; so let us make the worst of it.

The pony with the Dante Alighieri face, guided by the pressure of Sam's knees, bore that wandering minstrel sixteen miles south-eastward. Nature was in her most benignant mood. League after league of delicate, sweet flowerets made fragrant the gently undulating prairie. The east wind tempered the spring warmth ; wool-white clouds flying in from the Mexican Gulf hindered the direct rays of the April sun. Sam sang songs as he rode. Under his pony's bridle he had tucked some sprigs of chaparral to keep away the deer flies. Thus crowned, the long-faced quadruped looked more Dantesque than before, and, judging by his countenance, seemed to think of Beatrice.

Straight as topography permitted, Sam rode to the sheep ranch of old man Ellison. A visit to a sheep ranch seemed to him desirable just then. There had been too many people, too much noise, argument, competition, confusion, at Rancho Altito. He had never conferred upon old man Ellison the favour of sojourning at his ranch ; but he knew he would be welcome. The troubadour is his own passport everywhere. The Workers in the castle let down the drawbridge to him, and the Baron sets him at his left hand at table in the banquet hall. There ladies smile upon him and applaud his songs and stories, while the Workers bring boars' heads and flagons. If the Baron nods once or twice in his carved oaken chair, he does not do it maliciously.

Old man Ellison welcomed the troubadour flatteringly. He had often heard praises of Sam Galloway from other ranchmen who had been complimented by his visits, but had never aspired to such an honour for his own humble barony. I say barony because old man Ellison was the Last of the Barons. Of course, Bulwer-Lytton lived too early to know him, or he wouldn't have conferred that sobriquet upon Warwick. In life it is the duty and the function of the Baron to provide work for the Workers and lodging and shelter for the Troubadours.

Old man Ellison was a shrunken old man, with a short, yellow-white beard and a face lined and seamed by past-and-gone smiles. His ranch was a little two-room box house in a grove of hackberry trees in the lonesomest part of the sheep country. His household consisted of a Kiowa Indian man cook, four hounds, a pet sheep, and a half-tamed coyote chained to a fence-post. He owned 3000 sheep, which he ran on two sections of leased land and many thousands of acres neither leased nor owned. Three or four times a year some one who spoke his language would ride up to his gate and exchange a few bald ideas with him. Those were red-letter days to old man Ellison. Then in what illuminated, embossed, and gorgeously decorated capitals must have been written the day on which a troubadour—a troubadour who, according to the encyclopædia, should have flourished between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries—drew rein at the gates of his baronial castle!

Old man Ellison's smiles came back and filled his wrinkles when he saw Sam. He hurried out of the house in his shuffling, limping way to greet him.

"Hello, Mr. Ellison," called Sam cheerfully. "Thought I'd drop over and see you awhile. Notice you've had fine rains on your range. They ought to make good grazing for your spring lambs."

"Well, well, well," said old man Ellison. "I'm mighty glad to see you, Sam. I never thought you'd take the trouble to ride over to as out-of-the-way an old ranch as this. But you're mighty welcome. 'Light. I've got a sack of new oats in the kitchen—shall I bring out a feed for your hoss?"

"Oats for him?" said Sam derisively. "No, sir-ee. He's as fat as a pig now on grass. He don't get rode enough to keep him in condition. I'll just turn him in the horse pasture with a drag rope on if you don't mind."

I am positive that never during the eleventh and thirteenth centuries did Baron, Troubadour, and Worker amalgamate as harmoniously as their parallels did that evening at old man Ellison's sheep ranch. The Kiowa's biscuits were light and tasty and his coffee strong. Ineradicable hospitality and appreciation glowed on old man Ellison's weather-tanned face. As for the troubadour, he said to himself that he had stumbled upon pleasant places indeed. A well-cooked, abundant meal, a host whom his lightest attempt to entertain seemed to delight far beyond the merits of the exertion, and the reposeful atmosphere that his sensitive soul at that time craved united to confer upon him a satisfaction and luxurious ease that he had seldom found on his tours of the ranches.

After the delectable supper, Sam untied the green duck bag and took out his guitar. Not by way of payment, mind you—neither Sam Galloway nor any other of the true troubadours are lineal descendants of the late Tommy Tucker. You have read of Tommy Tucker in the works of the esteemed but often obscure Mother Goose. Tommy Tucker sang for his supper. No true troubadour would do that. He would have his supper, and then sing for Art's sake.

Sam Galloway's repertoire comprised about fifty funny stories and between thirty and forty songs. He by no means stopped there. He could talk through twenty cigarettes on any topic that you brought up. And he never sat up when he could lie down; and never stood when he could sit. I am strongly disposed to linger with him, for I am drawing a portrait as well as a blunt pencil and a tattered thesaurus will allow.

I wish you could have seen him: he was small and tough and inactive beyond the power of imagination to conceive. He wore an ultramarine-blue woollen shirt laced down the front with a pearl-grey, exaggerated sort of shoe-string, indestructible brown duck clothes, inevitable high-heeled boots with Mexican spurs, and a Mexican straw sombrero.

That evening Sam and old man Ellison dragged their chairs out under the hackberry trees. They lighted cigarettes; and the troubadour gaily touched his guitar. Many of the songs he sang were the weird, melancholy, minor-keyed *canciones* that he had learned from the Mexican sheep herders and *vaqueros*. One, in particular, charmed and soothed the soul of the lonely baron. It was a favourite song of the sheep herders, beginning "*Huile, huile,*

palomita," which being translated means, "Fly, fly, little dove." Sam sang it for old man Ellison many times that evening.

The troubadour stayed on at the old man's ranch. There was peace and quiet and appreciation there, such as he had not found in the noisy camps of the cattle kings. No audience in the world could have crowned the work of poet, musician, or artist with more worshipful and unflagging approval than that bestowed upon his efforts by old man Ellison. No visit by a royal personage to a humble woodchopper or peasant could have been received with more flattering thankfulness and joy.

On a cool, canvas-covered cot in the shade of the hackberry trees Sam Galloway passed the greater part of his time. There he rolled his brown paper cigarettes, read such tedious literature as the ranch afforded, and added to his repertoire of improvisations that he played so expertly on his guitar. To him, as a slave ministering to a great lord, the Kiowa brought cool water from the red jar hanging under the brush shelter, and food when he called for it. The prairie zephyrs fanned him mildly; mocking-birds at morn and eve competed with but scarce equalled the sweet melodies of his lyre; a perfumed stillness seemed to fill all his world. While old man Ellison was pottering among his flocks of sheep on his mile-an-hour pony, and while the Kiowa took his siesta in the burning sunshine at the end of the kitchen, Sam would lie on his cot thinking what a happy world he lived in, and how kind it is to the ones whose mission in life it is to give entertainment and pleasure. Here he had food and lodging as good as he had ever longed for; absolute immunity from care or exertion or strife; an endless welcome, and a host whose delight at the sixteenth repetition of a song or a story was as keen as at its initial giving. Was there ever a troubadour of old who struck upon as royal a castle in his wanderings? While he lay thus, meditating upon his blessings, little brown cottontails would shyly frolic through the yard; a covey of white-topknotted blue quail would run past, in single file, twenty yards away; a *paisano* bird, out hunting for tarantulas, would hop upon the fence and salute him with sweeping flourishes of its long tail. In the eighty-acre horse pasture the pony with the Dantesque face grew fat and almost smiling. The troubadour was at the end of his wanderings.

Old man Ellison was his own *vaciero.* That means that he supplied his sheep camps with wood, water, and rations by his own labours instead of hiring a *vaciero.* On small ranches it is often

done. One morning he started for the camp of Incarnación Felipe de la Cruz y Monte Piedras (one of his sheep herders) with the week's usual rations of brown beans, coffee, meal, and sugar. Two miles away on the trail from old Fort Ewing he met, face to face, a terrible being called King James, mounted on a fiery, prancing, Kentucky-bred horse. King James's real name was James King ; but people reversed it because it seemed to fit him better, and also because it seemed to please his majesty. King James was the biggest cattleman between the Alamo plaza in San Antone and Bill Hopper's saloon in Brownsville. Also he was the loudest and most offensive bully and braggart and bad man in south-west Texas. And he always made good whenever he bragged ; and the more noise he made the more dangerous he was. In the story papers it is always the quiet, mild-mannered man with light-blue eyes and a low voice who turns out to be really dangerous ; but in real life and in this story such is not the case. Give me my choice between assaulting a large, loud-mouthed rough-houser and an inoffensive stranger with blue eyes sitting quietly in a corner, and you will see something doing in the corner every time.

King James, as I intended to say earlier, was a fierce, two-hundred-pound, sunburned, blond man, as pink as an October strawberry, and with two horizontal slits under shaggy red eyebrows for eyes. On that day he wore a flannel shirt that was tan-coloured, with the exception of certain large areas which were darkened by transudations due to the summer sun. There seemed to be other clothing and garnishings about him, such as brown duck trousers stuffed into immense boots, and red handkerchiefs and revolvers ; and a shot-gun laid across his saddle and a leather belt with millions of cartridges shining in it—but your mind skidded off such accessories ; what held your gaze was just the two little horizontal slits that he used for eyes.

This was the man that old man Ellison met on the trail ; and when you count up in the baron's favour that he was sixty-five and weighed ninety-eight pounds and had heard of King James's record, and that he (the baron) had a hankering for the *vita simplex* and had no gun with him and wouldn't have used it if he had, you can't censure him if I tell you that the smiles with which the troubadour had filled his wrinkles went out of them and left them plain wrinkles again. But he was not the kind of baron that flies from danger. He reined in the mile-an-hour pony (no difficult feat) and saluted the formidable monarch.

King James expressed himself with royal directness.

"You're that old snoozer that's running sheep on this range, ain't you?" said he. "What right have you got to do it? Do you own any land, or lease any?"

"I have two sections leased from the state," said old man Ellison mildly.

"Not by no means you haven't," said King James. "Your lease expired yesterday; and I had a man at the land office on the minute to take it up. You don't control a foot of grass in Texas. You sheep men have got to git. Your time's up. It's a cattle country, and there ain't any room in it for snoozers. This range you've got your sheep on is mine. I'm putting up a wire fence, forty by sixty miles; and if there's a sheep inside of it when it's done it'll be a dead one. I'll give you a week to move yours away. If they ain't gone by then, I'll send six men over here with Winchesters to make mutton out of the whole lot. And if I find you here at the same time this is what you'll get."

King James patted the breech of his shot-gun warningly.

Old man Ellison rode on to the camp of Incarnación. He sighed many times, and the wrinkles in his face grew deeper. Rumours that the old order was about to change had reached him before. The end of Free Grass was in sight. Other troubles, too, had been accumulating upon his shoulders. His flocks were decreasing instead of growing; the price of wool was declining at every clip; even Bradshaw, the storekeeper at Frio City, at whose store he bought his ranch supplies, was dunning him for his last six months' bill and threatening to cut him off. And so this last greatest calamity suddenly dealt out to him by the terrible King James was a crusher.

When the old man got back to the ranch at sunset he found Sam Galloway lying on his cot, propped against a roll of blankets and wool sacks, fingering his guitar.

"Hello, Uncle Ben," the troubadour called cheerfully. "You rolled in early this evening. I been trying a new twist on the Spanish Fandango to-day. I just about got it. Here's how she goes—listen."

"That's fine, that's mighty fine," said old man Ellison, sitting on the kitchen step and rubbing his white, Scotch-terrier whiskers. "I reckon you've got all the musicians beat east and west, Sam, as far as the roads are cut out."

"Oh, I don't know," said Sam reflectively. "But I certainly do get there on variations. I guess I can handle anything in five flats

Richard Hardup Davis

about as well as any of 'em. But you look kind of fagged out, Uncle Ben—ain't you feeling right well this evening ? "

" Little tired ; that's all, Sam. If you ain't played yourself out, let's have that Mexican piece that starts off with '*Huile, huile, palomita.*' It seems that that song always kind of soothes and comforts me after I've been riding far or anything bothers me."

" Why, *seguramente, señor,*" said Sam. " I'll hit her up for you as often as you like. And before I forget about it, Uncle Ben, you want to jerk Bradshaw up about them last hams he sent us. They're just a little bit strong."

A man sixty-five years old, living on a sheep ranch and beset by a complication of disasters, cannot successfully and continuously dissemble. Moreover, a troubadour has eyes quick to see unhappiness in others around him—because it disturbs his own ease. So, on the next day, Sam again questioned the old man about his air of sadness and abstraction. Then old man Ellison told him the story of King James's threats and orders and that pale melancholy and red ruin appeared to have marked him for their own. The troubadour took the news thoughtfully. He had heard much about King James.

On the third day of the seven days of grace allowed him by the autocrat of the range, old man Ellison drove his buckboard to Frio City to fetch some necessary supplies for the ranch. Bradshaw was hard but not implacable. He divided the old man's order by two, and let him have a little more time. One article secured was a new fine ham for the pleasure of the troubadour.

Five miles out of Frio City on his way home the old man met King James riding into town. His majesty could never look anything but fierce and menacing, but to-day his slits of eyes appeared to be a little wider than they usually were.

" Good day," said the king gruffly. " I've been wanting to see you. I hear it said by a cowman from Sandy yesterday that you was from Jackson County, Mississippi, originally. I want to know if that's a fact."

" Born there," said old man Ellison, " and raised there till I was twenty-one."

" This man says," went on King James, " that he thinks you was related to the Jackson County Reeveses. Was he right ? "

" Aunt Caroline Reeves," said the old man, " was my half-sister."

" She was my aunt," said King James. " I run away from home

when I was sixteen. Now let's re-talk over some things that we discussed a few days ago. They call me a bad man; and they're only half right. There's plenty of room in my pasture for your bunch of sheep and their increase for a long time to come. Aunt Caroline used to cut out sheep in cake dough and bake 'em for me. You keep your sheep where they are, and use all the range you want. How's your finances?" The old man related his woes in detail, dignifiedly, with restraint and candour.

"She used to smuggle extra grub into my school basket—I'm speaking of Aunt Caroline," said King James. "I'm going over to Frio City to-day, and I'll ride back by your ranch to-morrow. I'll draw $2000 out of the bank there and bring it over to you; and I'll tell Bradshaw to let you have everything you want on credit. You are bound to have heard the old saying at home, that the Jackson County Reeveses and Kings would stick closer by each other than chestnut burrs. Well, I'm a King yet whenever I run across a Reeves. So you look out for me along about sundown to-morrow, and don't worry about nothing. Shouldn't wonder if the dry spell don't kill out the young grass."

Old man Ellison drove happily ranchward. Once more the smiles filled out his wrinkles. Very suddenly, by the magic of kinship and the good that lies somewhere in all hearts, his troubles had been removed.

On reaching the ranch he found that Sam Galloway was not there. His guitar hung by its buckskin string to a hackberry limb, moaning as the gulf breeze blew across its masterless strings.

The Kiowa endeavoured to explain. "Sam, he catch pony," said he, "and say he ride to Frio City. What for no can damn sabe. Say he come back to-night. Maybe so. That all."

As the first stars came out the troubadour rode back to his haven. He pastured his pony and went into the house, his spurs jingling martially.

Old man Ellison sat at the kitchen table, having a tin cup of before-supper coffee. He looked contented and pleased.

"Hello, Sam," said he, "I'm darned glad to see ye back. I don't know how I managed to get along on this ranch, anyhow, before ye dropped in to cheer things up. I'll bet ye've been skylarking around with some of them Frio City gals, now, that's kept ye so late."

And then old man Ellison took another look at Sam's face and saw that the minstrel had changed to the man of action.

And while Sam is unbuckling from his waist old man Ellison's six-shooter, that the latter had left behind when he drove to town, we may well pause to remark that anywhere and whenever a troubadour lays down the guitar and takes up the sword trouble is sure to follow. It is not the expert thrust of Athos nor the cold skill of Aramis nor the iron wrist of Porthos that we have to fear—it is the Gascon's fury—the wild and unacademic attack of the troubadour—the sword of D'Artagnan.

"I done it," said Sam. "I went over to Frio City to do it. I couldn't let him put the skibunk on you, Uncle Ben. I met him in Summers's saloon. I knowed what to do. I said a few things to him that nobody else heard. He reached for his gun first—half-a-dozen fellows saw him do it—but I got mine unlimbered first. Three doses I gave him—right around the lungs, and a saucer could have covered up all of 'em. He won't bother you no more."

"This—is—King—James—you speak—of?" asked old man Ellison, while he sipped his coffee.

"You bet it was. And they took me before the county judge; and the witnesses what saw him draw his gun first was all there. Well, of course, they put me under $300 bond to appear before the court, but there was four or five boys on the spot ready to sign the bail. He won't bother you no more, Uncle Ben. You ought to have seen how close them bullet holes was together. I reckon playing a guitar as much as I do must kind of limber a fellow's trigger finger up a little, don't you think, Uncle Ben?"

Then there was a little silence in the castle except for the spluttering of a venison steak that the Kiowa was cooking.

"Sam," said old man Ellison, stroking his white whiskers with a tremulous hand, "would you mind getting the guitar and playing that '*Huile, huile, palomita*' piece once or twice? It always seems to be kind of soothing and comforting when a man's tired and fagged out."

There is no more to be said, except that the title of the story is wrong. It should have been called "The Last of the Barons." There never will be an end to the troubadours; and now and then it does seem that the jingle of their guitars will drown the sound of the muffled blows of the pickaxes and trip-hammers of all the Workers in the world.

THE PASSING OF BLACK EAGLE

"O. HENRY"

FOR some months of a certain year a grim bandit infested the Texas border along the Rio Grande. Peculiarly striking to the optic nerve was this notorious marauder. His personality secured him the title of "Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border." Many fearsome tales are on record concerning the doings of him and his followers. Suddenly, in the space of a single minute, Black Eagle vanished from earth. He was never heard of again. His own band never even guessed the mystery of his disappearance. The border ranches and settlements feared he would come again to ride and ravage the mesquite flats. He never will. It is to disclose the fate of Black Eagle that this narrative is written.

The initial movement of the story is furnished by the foot of a bar-tender in St. Louis. His discerning eye fell upon the form of Chicken Ruggles as he pecked with avidity at the free lunch. Chicken was a "hobo." He had a long nose like the bill of a fowl, an inordinate appetite for poultry, and a habit of gratifying it without expense which accounts for the name given him by his fellow-vagrants.

Physicians agree that the partaking of liquids at meal times is not a healthy practice. The hygiene of the saloon promulgates the opposite. Chicken had neglected to purchase a drink to accompany his meal. The bar-tender rounded the counter, caught the injudicious diner by the ear with a lemon squeezer, led him to the door and kicked him into the street.

Thus the mind of Chicken was brought to realise the signs of coming winter. The night was cold; the stars shone with unkindly brilliancy; people were hurrying along the streets in two egotistic, jostling streams. Men had donned their overcoats, and Chicken knew to an exact percentage the increased difficulty of coaxing dimes from those buttoned-in vest pockets. The time had come for his annual exodus to the south.

A little boy, five or six years old, stood looking with covetous eyes in a confectioner's window. In one small hand he held an empty

two-ounce vial; in the other he grasped tightly something flat and round, with a shining milled edge. The scene presented a field of operations commensurate to Chicken's talents and daring. After sweeping the horizon to make sure that no official tug was cruising near, he insidiously accosted his prey. The boy, having been early taught by his household to regard altruistic advances with extreme suspicion, received the overtures coldly.

Then Chicken knew that he must make one of those desperate, nerve-shattering plunges into speculation that fortune sometimes requires of those who would win her favour. Five cents was his capital, and this he must risk against the chance of winning what lay within the close grasp of the youngster's chubby hand. It was a fearful lottery, Chicken knew. But he must accomplish his ends by strategy, since he had a wholesome terror of plundering infants by force. Once, in a park, driven by hunger, he had committed an onslaught upon a bottle of peptonised infant's food in the possession of an occupant of a baby carriage. The outraged infant had so promptly opened its mouth and pressed the button that communicated with the welkin that help arrived, and Chicken did his thirty days in a snug coop. Wherefore he was, as he said, "leary of kids."

Beginning artfully to question the boy concerning his choice of sweets, he gradually drew out the information he wanted. Mamma said he was to ask the drug-store man for ten cents' worth of paregoric in the bottle; he was to keep his hand shut tight over the dollar; he must not stop to talk to any one in the street; he must ask the drug-store man to wrap up the change and put it in the pocket of his trousers. Indeed, they had pockets—two of them! And he liked chocolate creams best.

Chicken went into the store and turned plunger. He invested his entire capital in C. A. N. D. Y. stocks, simply to pave the way to the greater risk following.

He gave the sweets to the youngster, and had the satisfaction of perceiving that confidence was established. After that it was easy to obtain leadership of the expedition; to take the investment by the hand and lead it to a nice drug store he knew of in the same block. There Chicken, with a parental air, passed over the dollar and called for the medicine, while the boy crunched his candy, glad to be relieved of the responsibility of the purchase. And then the successful investor, searching his pockets, found an overcoat button

—the extent of his winter trousseau—and, wrapping it carefully, placed the ostensible change in the pocket of confiding juvenility. Setting the youngster's face homeward, and patting him benevolently on the back—for Chicken's heart was as soft as those of his feathered namesakes—the speculator quit the market with a profit of 1700 per cent on his invested capital.

Two hours later an Iron Mountain freight engine pulled out of the railroad yards, Texas bound, with a string of empties. In one of the cattle cars, half buried in excelsior, Chicken lay at ease. Beside him in his nest was a quart bottle of very poor whisky and a paper bag of bread and cheese. Mr. Ruggles, in his private car, was on his trip south for the winter season.

For a week that car was trundled southward, shifted, laid over, and manipulated after the manner of rolling stock, but Chicken stuck to it, leaving it only at necessary times to satisfy his hunger and thirst. He knew it must go down to the cattle country, and San Antonio, in the heart of it, was his goal. There the air was salubrious and mild; the people indulgent and long-suffering. The bar-tenders there would not kick him. If he should eat too long or too often at one place they would swear at him as if by rote and without heat. They swore so drawlingly, and they rarely paused short of their full vocabulary, which was copious, so that Chicken had often gulped a good meal during the process of the vituperative prohibition. The season there was always spring-like; the plazas were pleasant at night, with music and gaiety; except during the slight and infrequent cold snaps one could sleep comfortably out of doors in case the interiors should develop inhospitality.

At Texarkana his car was switched to the I. and G. N. Then still southward it trailed until, at length, it crawled across the Colorado bridge at Austin, and lined out, straight as an arrow, for the run to San Antonio.

When the freight halted at that town Chicken was fast asleep. In ten minutes the train was off again for Laredo, the end of the road. Those empty cattle cars were for distribution along the line at points from which the ranches shipped their stock.

When Chicken awoke his car was stationary. Looking out between the slats he saw it was a bright, moonlit night. Scrambling out, he saw his car with three others abandoned on a little siding in a wild and lonesome country. A cattle pen and chute stood on one side of the track. The railroad bisected a vast, dim ocean of prairie, in the

midst of which Chicken, with his futile rolling stock, was as completely stranded as was Robinson with his land-locked boat.

A white post stood near the rails. Going up to it, Chicken read the letters at the top, S. A. 90. Laredo was nearly as far to the south. He was almost a hundred miles from any town. Coyotes began to yelp in the mysterious sea around him. Chicken felt lonesome. He had lived in Boston without an education, in Chicago without nerve, in Philadelphia without a sleeping place, in New York without a pull, and in Pittsburg sober, and yet he had never felt so lonely as now.

Suddenly through the intense silence he heard the whicker of a horse. The sound came from the side of the track toward the east, and Chicken began to explore timorously in that direction. He stepped high along the mat of curly mesquit grass, for he was afraid of everything there might be in this wilderness—snakes, rats, brigands, centipedes, mirages, cowboys, fandangoes, tarantulas, tamales—he had read of them in the story papers. Rounding a clump of prickly pear that reared high its fantastic and menacing array of rounded heads, he was struck to shivering terror by a snort and a thunderous plunge, as the horse, himself startled, bounded away some fifty yards, and then resumed his grazing. But here was the one thing in the desert that Chicken did not fear. He had been reared on a farm ; he had handled horses, understood them, and could ride.

Approaching slowly and speaking soothingly, he followed the animal, which, after its first flight, seemed gentle enough, and secured the end of the twenty-foot lariat that dragged after him in the grass. It required him but a few moments to contrive the rope into an ingenious nose-bridle, after the style of the Mexican *borsal.* In another he was upon the horse's back and off at a splendid lope, giving the animal free choice of direction. " He will take me somewhere," said Chicken to himself.

It would have been a thing of joy, that untrammelled gallop over the moonlit prairie, even to Chicken, who loathed exertion, but that his mood was not for it. His head ached ; a growing thirst was upon him ; the " somewhere " whither his lucky mount might convey him was full of dismal peradventure.

And now he noted that the horse moved to a definite goal. Where the prairie lay smooth he kept his course straight as an arrow's toward the east. Deflected by hill or arroyo or impracticable spinous brakes, he quickly flowed again into the current, charted by his unerring instinct. At last, upon the side of a gentle rise, he suddenly subsided

to a complacent walk. A stone's cast away stood a little mott of coma trees; beneath it a *jacal* such as the Mexicans erect—a one-room house of upright poles daubed with clay and roofed with grass or tule reeds. An experienced eye would have estimated the spot as the headquarters of a small sheep ranch. In the moonlight the ground in the near-by corral showed pulverised to a level smoothness by the hoofs of the sheep. Everywhere was carelessly distributed the paraphernalia of the place—ropes, bridles, saddles, sheep pelts, wool sacks, feed troughs, and camp litter. The barrel of drinking water stood in the end of the two-horse wagon near the door. The harness was piled, promiscuous, upon the wagon tongue, soaking up the dew.

Chicken slipped to earth, and tied the horse to a tree. He halloed again and again, but the house remained quiet. The door stood open, and he entered cautiously. The light was sufficient for him to see that no one was at home. He struck a match and lighted a lamp that stood on a table. The room was that of a bachelor ranchman who was content with the necessaries of life. Chicken rummaged intelligently until he found what he had hardly dared hope for—a small brown jug that still contained something near a quart of his desire.

Half an hour later, Chicken—now a gamecock of hostile aspect—emerged from the house with unsteady steps. He had drawn upon the absent ranchman's equipment to replace his own ragged attire. He wore a suit of coarse brown ducking, the coat being a sort of rakish bolero, jaunty to a degree. Boots he had donned, and spurs that whirred with every lurching step. Buckled around him was a belt full of cartridges with a big six-shooter in each of its two holsters. Prowling about, he found blankets, a saddle and bridle with which he caparisoned his steed. Again mounting, he rode swiftly away, singing a loud and tuneless song.

Bud King's band of desperadoes, outlaws, and horse and cattle thieves were in camp at a secluded spot on the bank of the Frio. Their depredations in the Rio Grande country, while no bolder than usual, had been advertised more extensively, and Captain Kinney's company of rangers had been ordered down to look after them. Consequently, Bud King, who was a wise general, instead of cutting out a hot trail for the upholders of the law, as his men wished to do, retired for the time to the prickly fastnesses of the Frio valley.

Though the move was a prudent one, and not incompatible with Bud's well-known courage, it raised dissension among the members of the band. In fact, while they thus lay ingloriously *perdu* in the brush, the question of Bud King's fitness for the leadership was argued, with closed doors, as it were, by his followers. Never before had Bud's skill or efficiency been brought to criticism ; but his glory was waning (and such is glory's fate) in the light of a newer star. The sentiment of the band was crystallising into the opinion that Black Eagle could lead them with more lustre, profit, and distinction.

This Black Eagle—sub-titled the " Terror of the Border "—had been a member of the gang about three months.

One night while they were in camp on the San Miguel water-hole a solitary horseman on the regulation fiery steed dashed in among them. The newcomer was of a portentous and devastating aspect. A beak-like nose with a predatory curve projected above a mass of bristling, blue-black whiskers. His eye was cavernous and fierce. He was spurred, sombreroed, booted, garnished with revolvers, abundantly drunk, and very much unafraid. Few people in the country drained by the Rio Bravo would have cared thus to invade alone the camp of Bud King. But this fell bird swooped fearlessly upon them and demanded to be fed.

Hospitality in the prairie country is not limited. Even if your enemy pass your way you must feed him before you shoot him. You must empty your larder into him before you empty your lead. So the stranger of undeclared intentions was set down to a mighty feast.

A talkative bird he was, full of most marvellous loud tales and exploits, and speaking a language at times obscure but never colourless. He was a new sensation to Bud King's men, who rarely encountered new types. They hung, delighted, upon his vainglorious boasting, the spicy strangeness of his lingo, his contemptuous familiarity with life, the world, and remote places, and the extravagant frankness with which he conveyed his sentiments.

To their guest the band of outlaws seemed to be nothing more than a congregation of country bumpkins whom he was " stringing for grub " just as he would have told his stories at the back door of a farmhouse to wheedle a meal. And, indeed, his ignorance was not without excuse, for the " bad man " of the South-west does not run to extremes. Those brigands might justly have been taken for a little party of peaceable rustics assembled for a fish-fry or pecan gathering. Gentle of manner, slouching of gait, soft-voiced, unpicturesquely

clothed; not one of them presented to the eye any witness of the desperate records they had earned.

For two days the glittering stranger within the camp was feasted. Then, by common consent, he was invited to become a member of the band. He consented, presenting for enrolment the prodigious name of "Captain Montressor." This name was immediately overruled by the band, and "Piggy" substituted as a compliment to the awful and insatiate appetite of its owner.

Thus did the Texas border receive the most spectacular brigand that ever rode its chaparral.

For the next three months Bud King conducted business as usual, escaping encounters with law officers and being content with reasonable profits. The band ran off some very good companies of horses from the ranges, and a few bunches of fine cattle which they got safely across the Rio Grande and disposed of to fair advantage. Often the band would ride into the little villages and Mexican settlements, terrorising the inhabitants and plundering for the provisions and ammunition they needed. It was during these bloodless raids that Piggy's ferocious aspect and frightful voice gained him a renown more widespread and glorious than those other gentle-voiced and sad-faced desperadoes could have acquired in a lifetime.

The Mexicans, most apt in nomenclature, first called him The Black Eagle, and used to frighten the babes by threatening them with tales of the dreadful robber who carried off little children in his great beak. Soon the name extended, and Black Eagle, the Terror of the Border, became a recognised factor in exaggerated newspaper reports and ranch gossip.

The country from the Nueces to the Rio Grande was a wild but fertile stretch, given over to the sheep and cattle ranches. Range was free; the inhabitants were few; the law was mainly a letter, and the pirates met with little opposition until the flaunting and garish Piggy gave the band undue advertisement. Then McKinney's ranger company headed for those precincts, and Bud King knew that it meant grim and sudden war or else temporary retirement. Regarding the risk to be unnecessary, he drew off his band to an almost inaccessible spot on the bank of the Frio. Wherefore, as has been said, dissatisfaction arose among the members, and impeachment proceedings against Bud were premeditated, with Black Eagle in high favour for the succession. Bud King was not unaware of the sentiment, and he called aside Cactus Taylor, his trusted lieutenant, to discuss it.

" If the boys," said Bud, " ain't satisfied with me, I'm willin' to step out. They're buckin' against my way of handlin' 'em. And 'specially because I concludes to hit the brush while Sam Kinney is ridin' the line. I saves 'em from bein' shot or sent up on a state contract, and they up and says I'm no good."

" It ain't so much that," explained Cactus, " as it is they're plum locoed about Piggy. They want them whiskers and that nose of his to split the wind at the head of the column."

" There's somethin' mighty seldom about Piggy," declared Bud musingly. " I never yet see anything on the hoof that he exactly grades up with. He can shore holler a plenty, and he straddles a hoss from where you laid the chunk. But he ain't never been smoked yet. You know, Cactus, we ain't had a row since he's been with us. Piggy's all right for skearin' the greaser kids and layin' waste a cross-roads store. I reckon he's the finest canned oyster buccaneer and cheese pirate that ever was, but how's his appetite for fightin' ? I've knowed some citizens you'd think was starvin' for trouble get a bad case of dyspepsy the first dose of lead they had to take."

" He talks all spraddled out," said Cactus, " 'bout the rookuses he's been in. He claims to have saw the elephant and hearn the owl."

" I know," replied Bud, using the cowpuncher's expressive phrase of scepticism, " but it sounds to me ! "

This conversation was held one night in camp while the other members of the band—eight in number—were sprawling around the fire, lingering over their supper. When Bud and Cactus ceased talking they heard Piggy's formidable voice holding forth to the others as usual while he was engaged in checking, though never satisfying, his ravening appetite.

" Wat's de use," he was saying, " of chasin' little red cowses and hosses 'round for t'ousands of miles ? Dere ain't nuttin' in it. Gallopin' t'rough dese bushes and briers, and gettin' a t'irst dat a brewery couldn't put out, and missin' meals ! Say ! You know what I'd do if I was main finger of dis bunch ? I'd stick up a train. I'd blow de express car and make hard dollars where you guys gets wind. Youse makes me tired. Dis sook-cow kind of cheap sport gives me a pain."

Later on, a deputation waited on Bud. They stood on one leg, chewed mesquit twigs and circumlocuted, for they hated to hurt his feelings. Bud foresaw their business, and made it easy for them. Bigger risks and larger profits was what they wanted.

The suggestion of Piggy's about holding up a train had fired their imagination and increased their admiration for the dash and boldness of the instigator. They were such simple, artless, and custom-bound bushrangers that they had never before thought of extending their habits beyond the running off of live-stock and the shooting of such of their acquaintances as ventured to interfere.

Bud acted "on the level," agreeing to take a subordinate place in the gang until Black Eagle should have been given a trial as leader.

After a great deal of consultation, studying of time-tables, and discussion of the country's topography, the time and place for carrying out their new enterprise was decided upon. At that time there was a feedstuff famine in Mexico and a cattle famine in certain parts of the United States, and there was a brisk international trade. Much money was being shipped along the railroads that connected the two republics. It was agreed that the most promising place for the contemplated robbery was at Espina, a little station on the I. and G. N., about forty miles north of Laredo. The train stopped there one minute; the country around was wild and unsettled; the station consisted of but one house in which the agent lived.

Black Eagle's band set out, riding by night. Arriving in the vicinity of Espina they rested their horses all day in a thicket a few miles distant. The train was due at Espina at 10.30 P.M. They could rob the train and be well over the Mexican border with their booty by daylight the next morning.

To do Black Eagle justice, he exhibited no signs of flinching from the responsible honours that had been conferred upon him.

He assigned his men to their respective posts with discretion, and coached them carefully as to their duties. On each side of the track four of the band were to lie concealed in the chaparral. Gotch-Ear Rodgers was to stick up the station agent. Bronco Charlie was to remain with the horses, holding them in readiness. At a spot where it was calculated the engine would be when the train stopped, Bud King was to lie hidden on one side, Black Eagle himself on the other. The two would get the drop on the engineer and fireman, force them to descend and proceed to the rear. Then the express car would be looted, and the escape made. No one was to move until Black Eagle gave the signal by firing his revolver. The plan was perfect.

At ten minutes to train time every man was at his post, effectually concealed by the thick chaparral that grew almost to the rails. The

night was dark and lowering, with a fine drizzle falling from the flying gulf clouds. Black Eagle crouched behind a bush within five yards of the track. Two six-shooters were belted around him. Occasionally he drew a large black bottle from his pocket and raised it to his mouth.

A star appeared far down the track which soon waxed into the headlight of the approaching train. It came on with an increasing roar; the engine bore down upon the ambushing desperadoes with a glare and a shriek like some avenging monster come to deliver them to justice. Black Eagle flattened himself upon the ground. The engine, contrary to their calculations, instead of stopping between him and Bud King's place of concealment, passed fully forty yards farther before it came to a stand.

The bandit leader rose to his feet and peered around the bush. His men all lay quiet, awaiting the signal. Immediately opposite Black Eagle was a thing that drew his attention. Instead of being a regular passenger train it was a mixed one. Before him stood a box car, the door of which, by some means, had been left slightly open. Black Eagle went up to it and pushed the door farther open. An odour came forth—a damp, rancid, familiar, musty, intoxicating, beloved odour stirring strongly at old memories of happy days and travels. Black Eagle sniffed at the witching smell as the returned wanderer smells of the rose that twines his boyhood's cottage home. Nostalgia seized him. He put his hand inside. Excelsior—dry, springy, curly, soft, enticing, covered the floor. Outside the drizzle had turned to a chilling rain.

The train bell clanged. The bandit chief unbuckled his belt and cast it, with its revolvers, upon the ground. His spurs followed quickly, and his broad sombrero. Black Eagle was moulting. The train started with a rattling jerk. The ex-Terror of the Border scrambled into the box car and closed the door. Stretched luxuriously upon the excelsior, with the black bottle clasped closely to his breast, his eyes closed, and a foolish, happy smile upon his terrible features, Chicken Ruggles started upon his return trip.

Undisturbed, with the band of desperate bandits lying motionless, awaiting the signal to attack, the train pulled out from Espina. As its speed increased and the black masses of chaparral went whizzing past on either side, the express messenger, lighting his pipe, looked through his window and remarked feelingly:

"What a jim-dandy place for a hold-up!"

THE FURNISHED ROOM

"O. HENRY"

RESTLESS, shifting, fugacious as time itself is a certain vast bulk of the population of the red brick district of the lower West Side. Homeless, they have a hundred homes. They flit from furnished room to furnished room, transients for ever—transients in abode, transients in heart and mind. They sing "Home, Sweet Home" in ragtime; they carry their *lares et penates* in a bandbox; their vine is entwined about a picture hat; a rubber plant is their fig tree.

Hence the houses of this district, having had a thousand dwellers, should have a thousand tales to tell, mostly dull ones, no doubt; but it would be strange if there could not be found a ghost or two in the wake of all these vagrant ghosts.

One evening after dark a young man prowled among these crumbling red mansions, ringing their bells. At the twelfth he rested his lean hand-baggage upon the step and wiped the dust from his hat-band and forehead. The bell sounded faint and far away in some remote, hollow depths.

To the door of this, the twelfth house whose bell he had rung, came a housekeeper who made him think of an unwholesome, surfeited worm that had eaten its nut to a hollow shell and now sought to fill the vacancy with edible lodgers.

He asked if there was a room to let.

"Come in," said the housekeeper. Her voice came from her throat; her throat seemed lined with fur. "I have the third floor back, vacant since a week back. Should you wish to look at it?"

The young man followed her up the stairs. A faint light from no particular source mitigated the shadows of the halls. They trod noiselessly upon a stair carpet that its own loom would have forsworn. It seemed to have become vegetable; to have degenerated in that rank, sunless air to lush lichen or spreading moss that grew in patches to the staircase and was viscid under the foot like organic matter. At each turn of the stairs were vacant niches in the wall. Perhaps

plants had once been set within them. If so they had died in that foul and tainted air. It may be that statues of the saints had stood there, but it was not difficult to conceive that imps and devils had dragged them forth in the darkness and down to the unholy depths of some furnished pit below.

"This is the room," said the housekeeper, from her furry throat. "It's a nice room. It ain't often vacant. I had some most elegant people in it last summer—no trouble at all, and paid in advance to the minute. The water's at the end of the hall. Sprowls and Mooney kept it three months. They done a vaudeville sketch. Miss B'retta Sprowls—you may have heard of her—Oh, that was just the stage names—right there over the dresser is where the marriage certificate hung, framed. The gas is here, and you see there is plenty of closet room. It's a room everybody likes. It never stays idle long."

"Do you have many theatrical people rooming here?" asked the young man.

"They comes and goes. A good proportion of my lodgers is connected with the theatres. Yes, sir, this is the theatrical district. Actor people never stays long anywhere. I get my share. Yes, they comes and they goes."

He engaged the room, paying for a week in advance. He was tired, he said, and would take possession at once. He counted out the money. The room had been made ready, she said, even to towels and water. As the housekeeper moved away he put, for the thousandth time, the question that he carried at the end of his tongue.

"A young girl—Miss Vashner—Miss Eloise Vashner—do you remember such a one among your lodgers? She would be singing on the stage, most likely. A fair girl, of medium height and slender, with reddish gold hair and a dark mole near her left eyebrow."

"No, I don't remember the name. Them stage people has names they change as often as their rooms. They comes and they goes. No, I don't call that one to mind."

No. Always no. Five months of ceaseless interrogation and the inevitable negative. So much time spent by day in questioning managers, agents, schools and choruses; by night among the audiences of theatres from all-star casts down to music halls so low that he dreaded to find what he most hoped for. He who had loved her best had tried to find her. He was sure that since her disappearance from home this great water-girt city held her somewhere, but it was like

a monstrous quicksand, shifting its particles constantly, with no foundation, its upper granules of to-day buried to-morrow in ooze and slime.

The furnished room received its latest guest with a first glow of pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard, perfunctory welcome like the specious smile of a demirep. The sophistical comfort came in reflected gleams from the decayed furniture, the ragged brocade upholstery of a couch and two chairs, a foot-wide cheap pier-glass between the two windows, from one or two gilt picture frames and a brass bedstead in a corner.

The guest reclined, inert, upon a chair, while the room, confused in speech as though it were an apartment in Babel, tried to discourse to him of its divers tenantry.

A polychromatic rug like some brilliant-flowered, rectangular, tropical islet lay surrounded by a billowy sea of soiled matting. Upon the gay-papered wall were those pictures that pursue the homeless one from house to house—The Huguenot Lovers, The First Quarrel, The Wedding Breakfast, Psyche at the Fountain. The mantel's chastely severe outline was ingloriously veiled behind some pert drapery drawn rakishly askew like the sashes of the Amazonian ballet. Upon it was some desolate flotsam cast aside by the room's marooned when a lucky sail had borne them to a fresh port—a trifling vase or two, pictures of actresses, a medicine bottle, some stray cards out of a deck.

One by one, as the characters of a cryptograph become explicit, the little signs left by the furnished room's procession of guests developed a significance. The threadbare space in the rug in front of the dresser told that lovely woman had marched in the throng. Tiny finger prints on the wall spoke of little prisoners trying to feel their way to sun and air. A splattered stain, raying like the shadow of a bursting bomb, witnessed where a hurled glass or bottle had splintered with its contents against the wall. Across the pier-glass had been scrawled with a diamond in staggering letters the name "Marie." It seemed that the succession of dwellers in the furnished room had turned in fury—perhaps tempted beyond forbearance by its garish coldness—and wreaked upon it their passions. The furniture was chipped and bruised; the couch, distorted by bursting springs, seemed a horrible monster that had been slain during the stress of some grotesque convulsion. Some more potent upheaval had cloven a great slice from

the marble mantel. Each plank in the floor owned its particular cant and shriek as from a separate and individual agony. It seemed incredible that all this malice and injury had been wrought upon the room by those who had called it for a time their home; and yet it may have been the cheated home instinct surviving blindly, the resentful rage at false household gods that had kindled their wrath. A hut that is our own we can sweep and adorn and cherish.

The young tenant in the chair allowed these thoughts to file, soft-shod, through his mind, while there drifted into the room furnished sounds and furnished scents. He heard in one room a tittering and incontinent, slack laughter; in others the monologue of a scold, the rattling of dice, a lullaby, and one crying dully; above him a banjo tinkled with spirit. Doors banged somewhere; the elevated trains roared intermittently; a cat yowled miserably upon a back fence. And he breathed the breath of the house—a dank savour rather than a smell—a cold, musty effluvium as from underground vaults mingled with the reeking exhalations of linoleum and mildewed and rotten woodwork.

Then, suddenly, as he rested there, the room was filled with the strong, sweet odour of mignonette. It came as upon a single buffet of wind with such sureness and fragrance and emphasis that it almost seemed a living visitant. And the man cried aloud, "What, dear?" as if he had been called, and sprang up and faced about. The rich odour clung to him and wrapped him about. He reached out his arms for it, all his senses for the time confused and commingled. How could one be peremptorily called by an odour? Surely it must have been a sound. But, was it not the sound that had touched, that had caressed him?

"She has been in this room," he cried, and he sprang to wrest from it a token, for he knew he would recognise the smallest thing that had belonged to her or that she had touched. This enveloping scent of mignonette, the odour that she had loved and made her own —whence came it?

The room had been but carelessly set in order. Scattered upon the flimsy dresser scarf were half-a-dozen hairpins — those discreet, indistinguishable friends of womankind, feminine of gender, infinite of mood and uncommunicative of tense. These he ignored, conscious of their triumphant lack of identity. Ransacking the drawers of the dresser he came upon a discarded, tiny, ragged handkerchief. He

pressed it to his face. It was racy and insolent with heliotrope; he hurled it to the floor. In another drawer he found odd buttons, a theatre programme, a pawnbroker's card, two lost marshmallows, a book on the divination of dreams. In the last was a woman's black satin hair-bow, which halted him, poised between ice and fire. But the black satin hair-bow also is femininity's demure, impersonal, common ornament, and tells no tales.

And then he traversed the room like a hound on the scent, skimming the walls, considering the corners of the bulging matting on his hands and knees, rummaging mantel and tables, the curtains and hangings, the drunken cabinet in the corner, for a visible sign, unable to perceive that she was there beside, around, against, within, above him, clinging to him, wooing him, calling him so poignantly through the finer senses that even his grosser ones became cognisant of the call. Once again he answered loudly, "Yes, dear!" and turned, wild-eyed, to gaze on vacancy, for he could not yet discern form and colour and love and outstretched arms in the odour of mignonette. Oh, God! whence that odour, and since when have odours had a voice to call? Thus he groped. He burrowed in crevices and corners, and found corks and cigarettes. These he passed in passive contempt. But once he found in a fold of the matting a half-smoked cigar, and this he ground beneath his heel with a green and trenchant oath. He sifted the room from end to end. He found dreary and ignoble small records of many a peripatetic tenant; but of her whom he sought, and who may have lodged there, and whose spirit seemed to hover there, he found no trace. And then he thought of the housekeeper.

He ran from the haunted room downstairs and to a door that showed a crack of light. She came out to his knock. He smothered his excitement as best he could.

"Will you tell me, madam," he besought her, "who occupied the room I have before I came?"

"Yes, sir. I can tell you again. 'Twas Sprowls and Mooney, as I said. Miss B'retta Sprowls it was in the theatres, but Missis Mooney she was. My house is well known for respectability. The marriage certificate hung, framed, on a nail over——"

"What kind of a lady was Miss Sprowls—in looks, I mean?"

"Why, black-haired, sir, short, and stout, with a comical face. They left a week ago Tuesday."

"And before they occupied it?"

"Why, there was a single gentleman connected with the draying

business. He left owing me a week. Before him was Missis Crowder and her two children, that stayed four months; and back of them was old Mr. Doyle, whose sons paid for him. He kept the room six months. That goes back a year, sir, and further I do not remember."

He thanked her and crept back to his room. The room was dead. The essence that had vivified it was gone. The perfume of mignonette had departed. In its place was the old, stale odour of mouldy house furniture, of atmosphere in storage.

The ebbing of his hope drained his faith. He sat staring at the yellow, singing gaslight. Soon he walked to the bed and began to tear the sheets into strips. With the blade of his knife he drove them tightly into every crevice around windows and door. When all was snug and taut he turned out the light, turned the gas full on again, and laid himself gratefully upon the bed.

. . . . . .

It was Mrs. McCool's night to go with the can for beer. So she fetched it and sat with Mrs. Purdy in one of those subterranean retreats where housekeepers forgather and the worm dieth seldom.

"I rented out my third floor back this evening," said Mrs. Purdy, across a fine circle of foam. "A young man took it. He went up to bed two hours ago."

"Now, did ye, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am?" said Mrs. McCool, with intense admiration. "You do be a wonder for rentin' rooms of that kind. And did ye tell him, then?" she concluded in a husky whisper, laden with mystery.

"Rooms," said Mrs. Purdy, in her furriest tones, "are furnished for to rent. I did not tell him, Mrs. McCool."

"'Tis right ye are, ma'am; 'tis by renting rooms we kape alive. Ye have the rale sense for business, ma'am. There be many people will rayjict the rentin' of a room if they be tould a suicide has been after dyin' in the bed of it."

"As you say, we has our living to be making," remarked Mrs Purdy.

"Yis, ma'am; 'tis true. 'Tis just one wake ago this day I helped ye lay out the third floor back. A pretty slip of a colleen she was to be killin' herself wid the gas—a swate little face she had, Mrs. Purdy, ma'am."

"She'd a-been called handsome, as you say," said Mrs. Purdy, assenting but critical, "but for that mole she had a-growin' by her left eyebrow. Do fill up your glass again, Mrs. McCool."

THE DEFEAT OF THE CITY

"O. Henry"

ROBERT WALMSLEY'S descent upon the city resulted in a Kilkenny struggle. He came out of the fight victor by a fortune and a reputation. On the other hand, he was swallowed up by the city. The city gave him what he demanded, and then branded him, with its brand. It remodelled, cut, trimmed and stamped him to the pattern it approves. It opened its social gates to him, and shot him in on a close-cropped, formal lawn with the select herd of ruminants. In dress, habits, manners, provincialism, routine and narrowness he acquired that charming insolence, that irritating completeness, that sophisticated crassness, that overbalanced poise that makes the Manhattan gentleman so delightfully small in his greatness.

One of the up-state rural counties pointed with pride to the successful young metropolitan lawyer as a product of its soil. Six years earlier this county had removed the wheat straw from between its huckleberry-stained teeth, and emitted a derisive and bucolic laugh as old man Walmsley's freckle-faced "Bob" abandoned the certain three-per-diem meals of the one-horse farm for the discontinuous quick-lunch counters of the three-ringed metropolis. At the end of the six years no murder trial, coaching party, automobile accident or cotillion was complete in which the name of Robert Walmsley did not figure. Tailors waylaid him in the street to get a new wrinkle from the cut of his unwrinkled trousers. Hyphenated fellows in the clubs and members of the oldest subpœnaed families were glad to clap him on the back and allow him three letters of his name.

But the Matterhorn of Robert Walmsley's success was not scaled until he married Alicia Van Der Pool. I cite the Matterhorn, for just so high and cool and white and inaccessible was this daughter of the old burghers. The social Alps that ranged about her—over whose bleak passes a thousand climbers struggled—reached only to her knees. She towered in her own atmosphere, serene, chaste, prideful, wading in no fountains, dining no monkeys, breeding no dogs

for bench shows. She was a Van Der Pool. Fountains were made to play for her; monkeys were made for other people's ancestors; dogs, she understood, were created to be companions of blind persons and objectionable characters who smoked pipes.

This was the Matterhorn that Robert Walmsley accomplished. If he found, with the good poet with the game foot and artificially curled hair, that he who ascends to mountain-tops will find the loftiest peaks most wrapped in clouds and snow, he concealed his chilblains beneath a brave and smiling exterior. He was a lucky man and knew it, even though he were imitating the Spartan boy with an ice-cream freezer beneath his doublet frappéeing the region of his heart.

After a brief wedding-tour abroad, the couple returned to create a decided ripple in the calm cistern (so placid and cool and sunless it is) of the best society. They entertained at their red-brick mausoleum of ancient greatness in an old square that is a cemetery of crumbled glory. And Robert Walmsley was proud of his wife; although while one of his hands shook his guests' the other held tightly to his alpenstock and thermometer.

One day Alicia found a letter written to Robert by his mother. It was an unerudite letter, full of crops and motherly love and farm notes. It chronicled the health of the pig and the recent red calf, and asked concerning Robert's in return. It was a letter direct from the soil, straight from home, full of biographies of bees, tales of turnips, pæans of new-laid eggs, neglected parents, and the slump in dried apples.

"Why have I not been shown your mother's letters?" asked Alicia. There was always something in her voice that made you think of lorgnettes, of accounts at Tiffany's, of sledges smoothly gliding on the trail from Dawson to Forty Mile, of the tinkling of pendant prisms on your grandmother's chandeliers, of snow lying on a convent roof; of a police sergeant refusing bail. "Your mother," continued Alicia, "invites us to make a visit to the farm. I have never seen a farm. We will go there for a week or two, Robert."

"We will," said Robert, with the grand air of an associate Supreme Justice concurring in an opinion. "I did not lay the invitation before you because I thought you would not care to go. I am much pleased at your decision."

"I will write to her myself," answered Alicia, with a faint foreshadowing of enthusiasm. "Félice shall pack my trunks at once.

Seven, I think, will be enough. I do not suppose that your mother entertains a great deal. Does she give many house parties?"

Robert arose, and as attorney for rural places filed a demurrer against six of the seven trunks. He endeavoured to define, picture, elucidate, set forth, and describe a farm. His own words sounded strange in his ears. He had not realised how thoroughly urbsidised he had become.

A week passed, and found them landed at the little country station five hours out from the city. A grinning, stentorian, sarcastic youth driving a mule to a spring wagon hailed Robert savagely.

"Hallo, Mr. Walmsley. Found your way back at last, have you? Sorry I couldn't bring in the automobile for you, but dad's bull-tonguing the ten-acre clover patch with it to-day. Guess you'll excuse my not wearing a dress suit over to meet you—it ain't six o'clock yet, you know."

"I'm glad to see you, Tom," said Robert, grasping his brother's hand. "Yes, I've found my way at last. You've a right to say 'at last.' It's been over two years since the last time. But it will be oftener after this, my boy."

Alicia, cool in the summer heat as an Arctic wraith, white as a Norse snow maiden in her flimsy muslin and fluttering lace parasol, came round the corner of the station; and Tom was stripped of his assurance. He became chiefly eyesight clothed in blue jeans, and on the homeward drive to the mule alone did he confide in language the inwardness of his thoughts.

They drove homeward. The low sun dropped a spendthrift flood of gold upon the fortunate fields of wheat. The cities were far away. The road lay curling around wood and dale and hill like a ribbon lost from the robe of careless summer. The wind followed like a whinnying colt in the track of Phœbus's steeds.

By and by the farmhouse peeped grey out of its faithful grove; they saw the long lane with its convoy of walnut trees running from the road to the house; they smelled the wild rose and the breath of cool, damp willows in the creek's bed. And then in unison all the voices of the soil began a chant addressed to the soul of Robert Walmsley. Out of the tilted aisles of the dim wood they came hollowly; they chirped and buzzed from the parched grass; they trilled from the ripples of the creek ford; they floated up in clear Pan's pipe notes from the dimming meadows; the whip-poor-wills joined in as they

pursued midges in the upper air; slow-going cow-bells struck out a homely accompaniment—and this was what each one said: "You've found your way back at last, have you?"

The old voices of the soil spoke to him. Leaf and bud and blossom conversed with him in the old vocabulary of his careless youth—the inanimate things, the familiar stones and rails, the gates and furrows and roofs and turns of the road had an eloquence, too, and a power in the transformation. The country had smiled, and he had felt the breath of it, and his heart was drawn as if in a moment back to his old love. The city was far away.

This rural atavism, then, seized Robert Walmsley and possessed him. A queer thing he noticed in connection with it was that Alicia, sitting at his side, suddenly seemed to him a stranger. She did not belong to this recurrent phase. Never before had she seemed so remote, so colourless and high—so intangible and unreal. And yet he had never admired her more than when she sat there by him in the rickety spring waggon, chiming no more with his mood and with her environment than the Matterhorn chimes with a peasant's cabbage garden.

That night, when the greetings and the supper were over, the entire family, including Buff, the yellow dog, bestrewed itself upon the front porch. Alicia, not haughty but silent, sat in the shadow dressed in an exquisite pale-grey tea-gown. Robert's mother discoursed to her happily concerning marmalade and lumbago. Tom sat on the top step; Sisters Millie and Pam on the lowest step to catch the lightning bugs. Mother had the willow rocker. Father sat in the big arm-chair with one of its arms gone. Buff sprawled in the middle of the porch in everybody's way. The twilight pixies and pucks stole forth unseen and plunged other poignant shafts of memory into the heart of Robert. A rural madness entered his soul. The city was far away.

Father sat without his pipe, writhing in his heavy boots, a sacrifice to rigid courtesy. Robert shouted: "No, you don't!" He fetched the pipe and lit it; he seized the old gentleman's boots and tore them off. The last one slipped suddenly, and Mr. Robert Walmsley, of Washington Square, tumbled off the porch backward with Buff on top of him, howling fearfully. Tom laughed sarcastically.

Robert tore off his coat and vest and hurled them into a lilac bush. "Come out here, you land-lubber," he cried to Tom, "and I'll

put grass seed on your back. I think you called me a 'dude' a while ago. Come along and cut your capers."

Tom understood the invitation and accepted it with delight. Three times they wrestled on the grass, "side holds," even as the giants of the mat. And twice was Tom forced to bite grass at the hands of the distinguished lawyer. Dishevelled, panting, each still boasting of his own prowess, they stumbled back to the porch. Millie cast a pert reflection upon the qualities of a city brother. In an instant Robert had secured a horrid katydid in his fingers and bore down upon her. Screaming wildly, she fled up the lane, pursued by the avenging glass of form. A quarter of a mile and they returned, she full of apology to the victorious "dude." The rustic mania possessed him unabatedly.

"I can do up a cowpenful of you slow hayseeds," he proclaimed vaingloriously. "Bring on your bulldogs, your hired men, and your log-rollers."

He turned hand-springs on the grass that prodded Tom to envious sarcasm. And then, with a whoop, he clattered to the rear and brought back Uncle Ike, a battered coloured retainer of the family, with his banjo, and strewed sand on the porch and danced "Chicken in the Bread Tray" and did buck-and-wing wonders for half an hour longer. Incredibly wild and boisterous things he did. He sang, he told stories that set all but one shrieking, he played the yokel, the humorous clod-hopper; he was mad, mad with the revival of the old life in his blood.

He became so extravagant, that once his mother sought gently to reprove him. Then Alicia moved as though she were about to speak, but she did not. Through it all she sat immovable, a slim, white spirit in the dusk that no man might question or read.

By and by she asked permission to ascend to her room, saying that she was tired. On her way she passed Robert. He was standing in the door, the figure of vulgar comedy, with ruffled hair, reddened face, and unpardonable confusion of attire—no trace there of the immaculate Robert Walmsley, the courted clubman and ornament of select circles. He was doing a conjuring trick with some household utensils, and the family, now won over to him without exception, was beholding him with worshipful admiration.

As Alicia passed in Robert started suddenly. He had forgotten for the moment that she was present. Without a glance at him she went on upstairs.

After that the fun grew quiet. An hour passed in talk, and then Robert went up himself.

She was standing by the window when he entered their room. She was still clothed as when they were on the porch. Outside and crowding against the window was a giant apple tree, full blossomed.

Robert sighed and went near the window. He was ready to meet his fate. A confessed vulgarian, he foresaw the verdict of justice in the shape of that still, white-clad form. He knew the rigid lines that a Van Der Pool would draw. He was a peasant gambolling indecorously in the valley, and the pure, cold, white, unthawed summit of the Matterhorn could not but frown on him. He had been unmasked by his own actions. All the polish, the poise, the form that the city had given him had fallen from him like an ill-fitting mantle at the first breath of a country breeze. Dully he awaited the approaching condemnation.

"Robert," said the calm, cool voice of his judge, "I thought I married a gentleman."

Yes, it was coming. And yet, in the face of it, Robert Walmsley was eagerly regarding a certain branch of the apple tree upon which he used to climb out of that very window. He believed he could do it now. He wondered how many blossoms there were on the tree—ten millions? But here was some one speaking again:

"I thought I married a gentleman," the voice went on, "but——"

Why had she come and was standing so close by his side?

"But I find that I have married"—was this Alicia talking?—"something better—a man. Bob, dear, kiss me, won't you?"

The city was far away.

THE COP AND THE ANTHEM

"O. HENRY"

ON his bench in Madison Square Soapy moved uneasily. When wild goose honk high of nights, and when women without sealskin coats grow kind to their husbands, and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand.

A dead leaf fell in Soapy's lap. That was Jack Frost's card. Jack is kind to the regular denizens of Madison Square, and gives fair warning of his annual call. At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind, footman of the mansion of All Outdoors, so that the inhabitants thereof may make ready.

Soapy's mind became cognisant of the fact that the time had come for him to resolve himself into a singular Committee of Ways and Means to provide against the coming rigour. And therefore he moved uneasily on his bench.

The hibernatorial ambitions of Soapy were not of the highest. In them were no considerations of Mediterranean cruises, of soporific Southern skies or drifting in the Vesuvian Bay. Three months on the Island was what his soul craved. Three months of assured board and bed and congenial company, safe from Boreas and bluecoats, seemed to Soapy the essence of things desirable.

For years the hospitable Blackwell's had been his winter quarters. Just as his more fortunate fellow New Yorkers had bought their tickets to Palm Beach and the Riviera each winter, so Soapy had made his humble arrangements for his annual hegira to the Island. And now the time was come. On the previous night three Sabbath newspapers, distributed beneath his coat, about his ankles and over his lap, had failed to repulse the cold as he slept on his bench near the spurting fountain in the ancient square. So the Island loomed large and timely in Soapy's mind. He scorned the provisions made in the name of charity for the city's dependents. In Soapy's opinion the Law was more benign than Philanthropy. There was an endless round of institutions, municipal and eleemosynary, on which he might

set out and receive lodging and food accordant with the simple life. But to one of Soapy's proud spirit the gifts of charity are encumbered. If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy. As Caesar had his Brutus, every bed of charity must have its toll of a bath, every loaf of bread its compensation of a private and personal inquisition. Wherefore it is better to be a guest of the law, which though conducted by rules, does not meddle unduly with a gentleman's private affairs.

Soapy, having decided to go to the Island, at once set about accomplishing his desire. There were many easy ways of doing this. The pleasantest was to dine luxuriously at some expensive restaurant; and then, after declaring insolvency, be handed over quietly and without uproar to a policeman. An accommodating magistrate would do the rest.

Soapy left his bench and strolled out of the square and across the level sea of asphalt, where Broadway and Fifth Avenue flow together. Up Broadway he turned, and halted at a glittering café, where are gathered together nightly the choicest products of the grape, the silkworm and the protoplasm.

Soapy had confidence in himself from the lowest button of his vest upward. He was shaven, and his coat was decent and his neat black, ready-tied four-in-hand had been presented to him by a lady missionary on Thanksgiving Day. If he could reach a table in the restaurant unsuspected, success would be his. The portion of him that would show above the table would raise no doubt in the waiter's mind. A roasted mallard duck, thought Soapy, would be about the thing—with a bottle of Chablis, and then Camembert, a demi-tasse and a cigar. One dollar for the cigar would be enough. The total would not be so high as to call forth any supreme manifestation of revenge from the café management; and yet the meat would leave him filled and happy for the journey to his winter refuge.

But as Soapy set foot inside the restaurant door the head waiter's eye fell upon his frayed trousers and decadent shoes. Strong and ready hands turned him about and conveyed him in silence and haste to the sidewalk and averted the ignoble fate of the menaced mallard.

Soapy turned off Broadway. It seemed that his route to the coveted island was not to be an epicurean one. Some other way of entering limbo must be thought of.

At a corner of Sixth Avenue electric lights and cunningly displayed

wares behind plate-glass made a shop window conspicuous. Soapy took a cobble-stone and dashed it through the glass. People came running round the corner, a policeman in the lead. Soapy stood still, with his hands in his pockets, and smiled at the sight of brass buttons.

"Where's the man that done that?" inquired the officer excitedly.

"Don't you figure out that I might have had something to do with it?" said Soapy, not without sarcasm, but friendly, as one greets good fortune.

The policeman's mind refused to accept Soapy even as a clue. Men who smash windows do not remain to parley with the law's minions. They take to their heels. The policeman saw a man halfway down the block running to catch a car. With drawn club he joined in the pursuit. Soapy, with disgust in his heart, loafed along, twice unsuccessful.

On the opposite side of the street was a restaurant of no great pretensions. It catered to large appetites and modest purses. Its crockery and atmosphere were thick; its soup and napery thin. Into this place Soapy took his accusive shoes and tell-tale trousers without challenge. At a table he sat and consumed beefsteak, flapjacks, doughnuts, and pie. And then to the waiter he betrayed the fact that the minutest coin and himself were strangers.

"Now, get busy and call a cop," said Soapy. "And don't keep a gentleman waiting."

"No cop for youse," said the waiter, with a voice like butter cakes and an eye like the cherry in a Manhattan cocktail. "Hey, Con!"

Neatly upon his left ear on the callous pavement two waiters pitched Soapy. He arose, joint by joint, as a carpenter's rule opens, and beat the dust from his clothes. Arrest seemed but a rosy dream. The Island seemed very far away. A policeman who stood before a drug store two doors away laughed and walked down the street.

Five blocks Soapy travelled before his courage permitted him to woo capture again. This time the opportunity presented what he fatuously termed to himself a "cinch." A young woman of a modest and pleasing guise was standing before a show window gazing with sprightly interest at its display of shaving mugs and inkstands, and two yards from the window a large policeman of severe demeanour leaned against a water-plug.

It was Soapy's design to assume the rôle of the despicable and execrated "masher." The refined and elegant appearance of his

victim and the contiguity of the conscientious cop encouraged him to believe that he would soon feel the pleasant official clutch upon his arm that would ensure his winter quarters on the right little, tight little isle.

Soapy straightened the lady missionary's ready-made tie, dragged his shrinking cuffs into the open, set his hat at a killing cant and sidled toward the young woman. He made eyes at her, was taken with sudden coughs and "hems," smiled, smirked, and went brazenly through the impudent and contemptible litany of the "masher." With half an eye Soapy saw that the policeman was watching him fixedly. The young woman moved away a few steps, and again bestowed her absorbed attention upon the shaving mugs. Soapy followed, boldly stepping to her side, raised his hat and said:

"Ah there, Bedelia! Don't you want to come and play in my yard?"

The policeman was still looking. The persecuted young woman had but to beckon a finger and Soapy would be practically *en route* for his insular haven. Already he imagined he could feel the cosy warmth of the station-house. The young woman faced him and, stretching out a hand, caught Soapy's coat sleeve.

"Sure, Mike," she said joyfully, "if you'll blow me to a pail of suds. I'd have spoke to you sooner, but the cop was watching."

With the young woman playing the clinging ivy to his oak Soapy walked past the policeman overcome with gloom. He seemed doomed to liberty.

At the next corner he shook off his companion and ran. He halted in the district where by night are found the lightest streets, hearts, vows, and librettos. Women in furs and men in greatcoats moved gaily in the wintry air. A sudden fear seized Soapy that some dreadful enchantment had rendered him immune to arrest. The thought brought a little of panic upon it, and when he came upon another policeman lounging grandly in front of a transplendent theatre he caught at the immediate straw of "disorderly conduct."

On the sidewalk Soapy began to yell drunken gibberish at the top of his harsh voice. He danced, howled, raved, and otherwise disturbed the welkin.

The policeman twirled his club, turned his back to Soapy and remarked to a citizen:

"'Tis one of them Yale lads celebratin' the goose egg they give

to the Hartford College. Noisy; but no harm. We've instructions to lave them be."

Disconsolate, Soapy ceased his unavailing racket. Would never a policeman lay hands on him? In his fancy the Island seemed an unattainable Arcadia. He buttoned his thin coat against the chilling wind.

In a cigar store he saw a well-dressed man lighting a cigar at a swinging light. His silk umbrella he had set by the door on entering. Soapy stepped inside, secured the umbrella and sauntered off with it slowly. The man at the cigar light followed hastily.

"My umbrella," he said sternly.

"Oh, is it?" sneered Soapy, adding insult to petit larceny. "Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner."

The umbrella owner slowed his steps. Soapy did likewise, with a presentiment that luck would run against him. The policeman looked at the two curiously.

"Of course," said the umbrella man—"that is—well, you know how these mistakes occur—I—if it's your umbrella I hope you'll excuse me—I picked it up this morning in a restaurant—If you recognise it as yours, why—I hope you'll——"

"Of course it's mine," said Soapy viciously.

The ex-umbrella man retreated. The policeman hurried to assist a tall blonde in an opera cloak across the street in front of a street car that was approaching two blocks away.

Soapy walked eastward through a street damaged by improvements. He hurled the umbrella wrathfully into an excavation. He muttered against the men who wear helmets and carry clubs. Because he wanted to fall into their clutches, they seemed to regard him as a king who could do no wrong.

At length Soapy reached one of the avenues to the east where the glitter and turmoil was but faint. He set his face down this toward Madison Square, for the homing instinct survives even when the home is a park bench.

But on an unusually quiet corner Soapy came to a standstill. Here was an old church, quaint and rambling and gabled. Through one violet-stained window a soft light glowed, where, no doubt, the organist loitered over the keys, making sure of his mastery of the coming Sabbath anthem. For there drifted out to Soapy's ears

sweet music that caught and held him transfixed against the convolutions of the iron fence.

The moon was above, lustrous and serene ; vehicles and pedestrians were few ; sparrows twittered sleepily in the eaves—for a little while the scene might have been a country churchyard. And the anthem that the organist played cemented Soapy to the iron fence, for he had known it well in the days when his life contained such things as mothers and roses and ambitions and friends and immaculate thoughts and collars.

The conjunction of Soapy's receptive state of mind and the influences about the old church wrought a sudden and wonderful change in his soul. He viewed with swift horror the pit into which he had tumbled, the degraded days, unworthy desires, dead hopes, wrecked faculties, and base motives that made up his existence.

And also in a moment his heart responded thrillingly to this novel mood. An instantaneous and strong impulse moved him to battle with his desperate fate. He would pull himself out of the mire ; he would make a man of himself again ; he would conquer the evil that had taken possession of him. There was time ; he was comparatively young yet ; he would resurrect his old eager ambitions and pursue them without faltering. Those solemn but sweet organ notes had set up a revolution in him. To-morrow he would go into the roaring down-town district and find work. A fur importer had once offered him a place as driver. He would find him to-morrow and ask for the position. He would be somebody in the world. He would——

Soapy felt a hand laid on his arm. He looked quickly around into the broad face of a policeman.

" What are you doin' here ? " asked the officer.

" Nothin'," said Soapy.

" Then come along," said the policeman.

" Three months on the Island," said the Magistrate in the Police Court the next morning.

THE LAST LEAF

"O. Henry"

IN a little district west of Washington Square the streets have run crazy and broken themselves into small strips called "places." These "places" make strange angles and curves. One street crosses itself a time or two. An artist once discovered a valuable possibility in this street. Suppose a collector with a bill for paints, paper, and canvas should, in traversing this route, suddenly meet himself coming back, without a cent having been paid on account!

So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a "colony."

At the top of a squatty, three-storey brick house Sue and Johnsy had their studio. "Johnsy" was familiar for Joanna. One was from Maine; the other from California. They had met at the table d'hôte of an Eighth street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad, and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted.

That was in May. In November a cold, unseen stranger, whom the doctors called Pneumonia, stalked about the colony, touching one here and there with his icy finger. Over on the east side this ravager strode boldly, smiting his victims by scores, but his feet trod slowly through the maze of the narrow and moss-grown "places."

Mr. Pneumonia was not what you would call a chivalric old gentleman. A mite of a little woman with blood thinned by California zephyrs was hardly fair game for the red-fisted, short-breathed old duffer. But Johnsy he smote; and she lay, scarcely moving, on her painted iron bedstead, looking through the small Dutch window-panes at the blank side of the next brick house.

One morning the busy doctor invited Sue into the hallway with a shaggy, grey eyebrow.

"She has one chance in—let us say, ten," he said, as he shook

down the mercury in his clinical thermometer. "And that chance is for her to want to live. This way people have of lining-up on the side of the undertaker makes the entire pharmacopeia look silly. Your little lady has made up her mind that she's not going to get well. Has she anything on her mind?"

"She—she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples some day," said Sue.

"Paint?—bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking about twice—a man, for instance?"

"A man?" said Sue, with a jews'-harp twang in her voice. "Is a man worth—but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind."

"Well, it is the weakness, then," said the doctor. "I will do all that science, so far as it may filter through my efforts, can accomplish. But whenever my patient begins to count the carriages in her funeral procession I subtract 50 per cent from the curative power of medicines. If you will get her to ask one question about the new winter styles in cloak sleeves I will promise you a one-in-five chance for her, instead of one in ten."

After the doctor had gone, Sue went into the workroom and cried a Japanese napkin to a pulp. Then she swaggered into Johnsy's room with her drawing-board, whistling ragtime.

Johnsy lay, scarcely making a ripple under the bedclothes, with her face toward the window. Sue stopped whistling, thinking she was asleep.

She arranged her board and began a pen-and-ink drawing to illustrate a magazine story. Young artists must pave their way to Art by drawing pictures for magazine stories that young authors write to pave their way to Literature.

As Sue was sketching a pair of elegant horseshow riding trousers and a monocle on the figure of the hero, an Idaho cowboy, she heard a low sound, several times repeated. She went quickly to the bedside.

Johnsy's eyes were open wide. She was looking out the window and counting—counting backward.

"Twelve," she said, and a little later, "eleven"; and then "ten," and "nine"; and then "eight" and "seven," almost together.

Sue looked solicitously out the window. What was there to count? There was only a bare, dreary yard to be seen, and the blank side of the brick house twenty feet away. An old, old ivy vine, gnarled and decayed at the roots, climbed half-way up the brick wall. The cold

breath of autumn had stricken its leaves from the vine until its skeleton branches clung, almost bare, to the crumbling bricks.

"What is it, dear?" asked Sue.

"Six," said Johnsy, in almost a whisper. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. It made my head ache to count them. But now it's easy. There goes another one. There are only five left now."

"Five what, dear? Tell your Sudie."

"Leaves. On the ivy vine. When the last one falls I must go too. I've known that for three days. Didn't the doctor tell you?"

"Oh, I never heard of such nonsense!" complained Sue, with magnificent scorn. "What have old ivy leaves to do with your getting well? And you used to love that vine so, you naughty girl. Don't be a goosey. Why, the doctor told me this morning that your chances for getting well real soon were—let's see exactly what he said—he said the chances were ten to one! Why, that's almost as good a chance as we have in New York when we ride on the street cars or walk past a new building. Try to take some broth now, and let Sudie go back to her drawing, so she can sell the editor man with it, and buy port wine for her sick child, and pork chops for her greedy self."

"You needn't get any more wine," said Johnsy, keeping her eyes fixed out the window. "There goes another. No, I don't want any broth. That leaves just four. I want to see the last one fall before it gets dark. Then I'll go too."

"Johnsy, dear," said Sue, bending over her, "will you promise me to keep your eyes closed, and not look out the window until I am done working? I must hand those drawings in by to-morrow. I need the light, or I would draw the shade down."

"Couldn't you draw in the other room?" asked Johnsy coldly.

"I'd rather be here by you," said Sue. "Besides, I don't want you to keep looking at those silly ivy leaves."

"Tell me as soon as you have finished," said Johnsy, closing her eyes, and lying white and still as a fallen statue, "because I want to see the last one fall. I'm tired of waiting. I'm tired of thinking. I want to turn loose my hold on everything, and go sailing down, down, just like one of those poor, tired leaves."

"Try to sleep," said Sue. "I must call Behrman up to be my model for the old hermit miner. I'll not be gone a minute. Don't try to move till I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the ground floor beneath them. He was past sixty and had a Michael Angelo's Moses beard curling down from the head of a satyr along the body of an imp. Behrman was a failure in art. Forty years he had wielded the brush without getting near enough to touch the hem of his Mistress's robe. He had been always about to paint a masterpiece, but had never yet begun it. For several years he had painted nothing except now and then a daub in the line of commerce or advertising. He earned a little by serving as a model to those young artists in the colony who could not pay the price of a professional. He drank gin to excess, and still talked of his coming masterpiece. For the rest he was a fierce little old man, who scoffed terribly at softness in any one, and who regarded himself as especial mastiff-in-waiting to protect the two young artists in the studio above.

Sue found Behrman smelling strongly of juniper berries in his dimly lighted den below. In one corner was a blank canvas on an easel that had been waiting there for twenty-five years to receive the first line of the masterpiece. She told him of Johnsy's fancy, and how she feared she would, indeed, light and fragile as a leaf herself, float away when her slight hold upon the world grew weaker.

Old Behrman, with his red eyes plainly streaming, shouted his contempt and derision for such idiotic imaginings.

"Vass!" he cried. "Is dere people in de world mit der foolishness to die because leafs dey drop off from a confounded vine? I haf not heard of such a thing. No, I vill not bose as a model for your fool hermit-dunderhead. Vy do you allow dot silly pusiness to come in der prain of her? Ach, dot poor lettle Miss Yohnsy."

"She is very ill and weak," said Sue, "and the fever has left her mind morbid and full of strange fancies. Very well, Mr. Behrman, if you do not care to pose for me, you needn't. But I think you are a horrid old—old flibbertigibbet."

"You are just like a woman!" yelled Behrman. "Who said I vill not bose? Go on. I come mit you. For half an hour I haf peen trying to say dot I am ready to bose. Gott! dis is not any blace in which one so goot as Miss Yohnsy shall lie sick. Some day I vill baint a masterpiece, and ve shall all go avay. Gott! yes."

Johnsy was sleeping when they went upstairs. Sue pulled the shade down to the window-sill, and motioned Behrman into the other room. In there they peered out the window fearfully at the ivy vine.

Then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking. A persistent, cold rain was falling, mingled with snow. Behrman, in his old blue shirt, took his seat as the hermit-miner on an upturned kettle for a rock.

When Sue awoke from an hour's sleep the next morning she found Johnsy, with dull, wide-open eyes staring at the drawn green shade.

"Pull it up; I want to see," she ordered in a whisper.

Wearily Sue obeyed.

But lo! after the beating rain and fierce gusts of wind that had endured through the livelong night, there yet stood out against the brick wall one ivy leaf. It was the last on the vine. Still dark-green near its stem, but with its serrated edges tinted with the yellow of dissolution and decay, it hung bravely from a branch some twenty feet above the ground.

"It is the last one," said Johnsy. "I thought it would surely fall during the night. I heard the wind. It will fall to-day, and I shall die at the same time."

"Dear, dear!" said Sue, leaning her worn face down to the pillow; "think of me, if you won't think of yourself. What would I do?"

But Johnsy did not answer. The lonesomest thing in all the world is a soul when it is making ready to go on its mysterious, far journey. The fancy seemed to possess her more strongly as one by one the ties that bound her to friendship and to earth were loosed.

The day wore away, and even through the twilight they could see the lone ivy leaf clinging to its stem against the wall. And then, with the coming of the night the north wind was again loosed, while the rain still beat against the windows and pattered down from the low Dutch eaves.

When it was light enough Johnsy, the merciless, commanded that the shade be raised.

The ivy leaf was still there.

Johnsy lay for a long time looking at it. And then she called to Sue, who was stirring her chicken broth over the gas stove.

"I've been a bad girl, Sudie," said Johnsy. "Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me how wicked I was. It is a sin to want to die. You may bring me a little broth now, and some milk with a little port in it, and—no; bring me a hand-mirror first; and then pack some pillows about me, and I will sit up and watch you cook."

An hour later she said—

"Sudie, some day I hope to paint the Bay of Naples."

The doctor came in the afternoon, and Sue had an excuse to go into the hallway as he left.

"Even chances," said the doctor, taking Sue's thin, shaking hand in his. "With good nursing you'll win. And now I must see another case I have downstairs. Behrman, his name is—some kind of an artist, I believe. Pneumonia, too. He is an old, weak man, and the attack is acute. There is no hope for him; but he goes to the hospital to-day to be made more comfortable."

The next day the doctor said to Sue: "She's out of danger. You've won. Nutrition and care now—that's all."

And that afternoon Sue came to the bed where Johnsy lay, contentedly knitting a very blue and very useless woollen shoulder scarf, and put one arm around her, pillows and all.

"I have something to tell you, white mouse," she said. "Mr. Behrman died of pneumonia to-day in the hospital. He was ill only two days. The janitor found him on the morning of the first day in his room downstairs helpless with pain. His shoes and clothing were wet through and icy cold. They couldn't imagine where he had been on such a dreadful night. And then they found a lantern, still lighted, and a ladder that had been dragged from its place and some scattered brushes, and a palette with green and yellow colours mixed on it, and—look out the window, dear, at the last ivy leaf on the wall. Didn't you wonder why it never fluttered or moved when the wind blew? Ah, darling, it's Behrman's masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell."

THE LOST BLEND

"O. Henry"

SINCE the bar has been blessed by the clergy, and cocktails open the dinners of the elect, one may speak of the saloon. Teetotallers need not listen, if they choose; there is always the slot restaurant, where a dime dropped into the cold bouillon aperture will bring forth a dry Martini.

Con Lantry worked in the sober side of the bar in Kenealy's café. You and I stood, one-legged like geese, on the other side and went into voluntary liquidation with our week's wages. Opposite danced Con, clean, temperate, clear-headed, polite, white-jacketed, punctual, trustworthy, young, responsible, and took our money.

The saloon (whether blessed or cursed) stood in one of those little "places" which are parallelograms instead of streets, and inhabited by laundries, decayed Knickerbocker families and Bohemians who have nothing to do with either.

Over the café lived Kenealy and his family. His daughter Katherine had eyes of dark Irish—but why should you be told? Be content with your Geraldine or your Eliza Ann. For Con dreamed of her; and when she called softly at the foot of the back stairs for the pitcher of beer for dinner, his heart went up and down like a milk punch in the shaker. Orderly and fit are the rules of Romance; and if you hurl the last shilling of your fortune upon the bar for whisky, the bar-tender shall take it, and marry his boss's daughter, and good will grow out of it.

But not so Con. For in the presence of woman he was tongue-tied and scarlet. He who would quell with his eye the sonorous youth whom the claret punch made loquacious, or smash with lemon squeezer the obstreperous, or hurl gutterward the cantankerous without a wrinkle coming to his white lawn tie, when he stood before woman he was voiceless, incoherent, stuttering, buried beneath a hot avalanche of bashfulness and misery. What, then, was he before Katherine? A trembler, with no word to say for himself, a stone without blarney, the dumbest lover that ever babbled of the weather in the presence of his divinity.

There came to Kenealy's two sunburned men, Riley and McQuirk. They had conference with Kenealy; and then they took possession of a back room which they filled with bottles and siphons and jugs and druggist's measuring glasses. All the appurtenances and liquids of a saloon were there, but they dispensed no drinks. All day long the two sweltered in there, pouring and mixing unknown brews and decoctions from the liquors in their store. Riley had the education, and he figured on reams of paper, reducing gallons to ounces and quarts to fluid drams. McQuirk, a morose man with a red eye, dashed each unsuccessful completed mixture into the waste pipes with curses gentle, husky and deep. They laboured heavily and untiringly to achieve some mysterious solution like two alchemists striving to resolve gold from the elements.

Into this back room one evening when his watch was done sauntered Con. His professional curiosity had been stirred by these occult bar-tenders at whose bar none drank, and who daily drew upon Kenealy's store of liquors to follow their consuming and fruitless experiments.

Down the back stairs came Katherine with her smile like sunrise on Gweebarra Bay.

"Good-evening, Mr. Lantry," says she. "And what is the news to-day, if you please?"

"It looks like r-rain," stammered the shy one, backing to the wall.

"It couldn't do better," said Katherine. "I'm thinking there's nothing the worse off for a little water." In the back room Riley and McQuirk toiled like bearded witches over their strange compounds. From fifty bottles they drew liquids carefully measured after Riley's figures, and shook the whole together in a great glass vessel. Then McQuirk would dash it out, with gloomy profanity, and they would begin again.

"Sit down," said Riley to Con, "and I'll tell you.

"Last summer me and Tim concludes that an American bar in this nation of Nicaragua would pay. There was a town on the coast where there's nothing to eat but quinine and nothing to drink but rum. The natives and foreigners lay down with chills and get up with fevers; and a good mixed drink is nature's remedy for all such tropical inconveniences.

"So we lays in a fine stock of wet goods in New York, and bar fixtures and glassware, and we sails for that Santa Palma town on a

line steamer. On the way me and Tim sees flying fish and plays seven-up with the captain and steward, and already begins to feel like the high-ball kings of the tropic of Capricorn.

"When we gets in five hours of the country that we was going to introduce to long drinks and short change, the captain calls us over to the starboard binnacle and recollects a few things.

"'I forgot to tell you, boys,' says he, 'that Nicaragua slapped an import duty of 48 per cent *ad valorem* on all bottled goods last month. The President took a bottle of Cincinnati hair tonic by mistake for tabasco sauce, and he's getting even. Barrelled goods is free.'

"'Sorry you didn't mention it sooner,' says we. And we bought two forty-two gallon casks from the captain, and opened every bottle we had and dumped the stuff all together in the casks. That 48 per cent would have ruined us; so we took the chances on making that $1200 cocktail rather than throw the stuff away.

"Well, when we landed we tapped one of the barrels. The mixture was something heartrending. It was the colour of a plate of Bowery pea-soup, and it tasted like one of those coffee substitutes your aunt makes you take for the heart trouble you get by picking losers. We gave a nigger four fingers of it to try it, and he lay under a cocoanut tree three days beating the sand with his heels and refused to sign a testimonial.

"But the other barrel! Say, bar-tender, did you ever put on a straw hat with a yellow band around it and go up in a balloon with a pretty girl with $8,000,000 in your pocket all at the same time? That's what thirty drops of it would make you feel like. With two fingers of it inside you, you would bury your face in your hands and cry because there wasn't anything more worth while around for you to lick than little Jim Jeffries. Yes, sir, the stuff in that second barrel was distilled elixir of battle, money and high life. It was the colour of gold and as clear as glass, and it shone after dark like the sunshine was still in it. A thousand years from now you'll get a drink like that across the bar.

"Well, we started up business with that one line of drinks, and it was enough. The piebald gentry of that country stuck to it like a hive of bees. If that barrel had lasted, that country would have become the greatest on earth. When we opened up of mornings we had a line of Generals and Colonels and ex-Presidents and revolutionists a block

long waiting to be served. We started in at 50 cents silver a drink. The last ten gallons went easy at $5 a gulp. It was wonderful stuff. It gave a man courage and ambition and nerve to do anything; at the same time he didn't care whether his money was tainted or fresh from the Ice Trust. When that barrel was half gone Nicaragua had repudiated the National Debt, removed the duty on cigarettes, and was about to declare war on the United States and England.

"'Twas by accident we discovered this king of drinks, and 'twill be by good luck if we strike it again. For ten months we've been trying. Small lots at a time, we've mixed barrels of all the harmful ingredients known to the profession of drinking. Ye could have stocked ten bars with the whiskeys, brandies, cordials, bitters, gins and wines me and Tim have wasted. A glorious drink like that to be denied to the world! 'Tis a sorrow and a loss of money. The United States as a nation would welcome a drink of the sort, and pay for it."

All the while McQuirk had been carefully measuring and pouring together small quantities of various spirits, as Riley called them, from his latest pencilled prescription. The completed mixture was of a vile, mottled chocolate colour. McQuirk tasted it, and hurled it, with appropriate epithets, into the waste sink.

"'Tis a strange story, even if true," said Con. "I'll be going now along to my supper."

"Take a drink," said Riley. "We've all kinds except the lost blend."

"I never drink," said Con, "anything stronger than water. I am just after meeting Miss Katherine by the stairs. She said a true word. 'There's not anything,' says she, 'but is better off for a little water.'"

When Con had left them Riley almost felled McQuirk by a blow on the back.

"Did you hear that?" he shouted. "Two fools are we. The six dozen bottles of 'pollinaris we had on the ship—ye opened them yourself—which barrel did ye pour them in—which barrel, ye mud-head?"

"I mind," said McQuirk slowly, "'twas in the second barrel we opened. I mind the blue piece of paper pasted on the side of it."

"We've got it now," cried Riley. "'Twas that we lacked. 'Tis the water that does the trick. Everything else we had right. Hurry,

man, and get two bottles of 'pollinaris from the bar, while I figure out the proportionments with me pencil."

An hour later Con strolled down the sidewalk toward Kenealy's café. Thus faithful employees haunt, during their recreation hours, the vicinity where they labour, drawn by some mysterious attraction.

A police patrol wagon stood at the side door. Three able cops were half carrying, half hustling Riley and McQuirk up its rear steps. The eyes and faces of each bore the bruises and cuts of sanguinary and assiduous conflict. Yet they whooped with strange joy, and directed upon the police the feeble remnants of their pugnacious madness.

"Began fighting each other in the back room," explained Kenealy to Con. "And singing! That was worse. Smashed everything pretty much up. But they're good men. They'll pay for everything. Trying to invent some new kind of cocktail, they was. I'll see they come out all right in the morning."

Con sauntered into the back room to view the battle-field. As he went through the hall Katherine was just coming down the stairs.

"Good-evening again, Mr. Lantry," said she. "And is there no news from the weather yet?"

"Still threatens r-rain," said Con, slipping past with red in his smooth, pale cheek.

Riley and McQuirk had indeed waged a great and friendly battle. Broken bottles and glasses were everywhere. The room was full of alcohol fumes; the floor was variegated with spirituous puddles.

On the table stood a 32-ounce glass graduated measure. In the bottom of it were two tablespoonfuls of liquid—a bright golden liquid that seemed to hold the sunshine a prisoner in its auriferous depths.

Con smelled it. He tasted it. He drank it.

As he returned through the hall Katherine was just going up the stairs.

"No news yet, Mr. Lantry?" she asked, with her teasing laugh.

Con lifted her clear from the floor and held her there.

"The news is," he said, "that we're to be married."

"Put me down, sir!" she cried indignantly, "or I will—— Oh, Con, where, oh, wherever did you get the nerve to say it?"

VANITY AND SOME SABLES

"O. Henry"

WHEN "Kid" Brady was sent to the ropes by Molly McKeever's blue-black eyes he withdrew from the Stovepipe Gang. So much for the power of a colleen's blanderin' tongue and stubborn true-heartedness. If you are a man who read this, may such an influence be sent you before two o'clock to-morrow; if you are a woman, may your Pomeranian greet you this morning with a cold nose—a sign of dog health and your happiness.

The Stovepipe Gang borrowed its name from a subdistrict of the city called the "Stovepipe," which is a narrow and natural extension of the familiar district known as "Hell's Kitchen." The "Stovepipe" strip of town runs along Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues on the river, and bends a hard and sooty elbow around little, lost, homeless DeWitt Clinton Park. Consider that a stovepipe is an important factor in any kitchen and the situation is analysed. The chefs in "Hell's Kitchen" are many, and the Stovepipe Gang wears the cordon blue.

The members of this unchartered but widely known brotherhood appeared to pass their time on street corners arrayed like the lilies of the conservatory and busy with nail files and penknives. Thus displayed as a guarantee of good faith, they carried on an innocuous conversation in a 200-word vocabulary, to the casual observer as innocent and immaterial as that heard in the clubs seven blocks to the east.

But off exhibition the "Stovepipes" were not mere street corner ornaments addicted to posing and manicuring. Their serious occupation was the separating of citizens from their coin and valuables. Preferably this was done by weird and singular tricks without noise or bloodshed; but whenever the citizen honoured by their attentions refused to impoverish himself gracefully, his objections came to be spread finally upon some police station blotter or hospital register.

The police held the Stovepipe Gang in perpetual suspicion and respect. As the nightingale's liquid note is heard in the deepest

shadows, so along the "Stovepipe's" dark and narrow confines the whistle for reserves punctures the dull ear of night. Whenever there was smoke in the "Stovepipe" the tasselled men in blue knew there was fire in "Hell's Kitchen."

"Kid" Brady promised Molly to be good. "Kid" was the vainest, the strongest, the wariest and the most successful plotter in the gang. Therefore, the boys were sorry to give him up.

But they witnessed his fall to a virtuous life without protest. For, in the Kitchen it is considered neither unmanly nor improper for a guy to do as his girl advises.

Black her eye for love's sake, if you will; but it is all-to-the-good business to do a thing when she wants you to do it.

"Turn off the hydrant," said the Kid, one night when Molly, tearful, besought him to amend his ways. "I'm going to cut out the gang. You for mine, and the simple life on the side. I'll tell you, Moll—I'll get work; and in a year we'll get married. I'll do it for you. We'll get a flat and a flute, and a sewing machine, and a rubber plant and live as honest as we can."

"Oh, Kid," sighed Molly, wiping the powder off his shoulder with her handkerchief, "I'd rather hear you say that than to own all of New York. And we can be happy on so little!"

The Kid looked down at his speckless cuffs and shining patent leathers with a suspicion of melancholy.

"It'll hurt hardest in the rags department," said he. "I've kind of always liked to rig out swell when I could. You know how I hate cheap things, Moll. This suit set me back sixty-five. Anything in the wearing apparel line has got to be just so, or it's to the misfit parlours for it, for mine. If I work I won't have so much coin to hand over to the little man with the big shears."

"Never mind, Kid. I'll like you just as much in a blue jumper as I would in a red automobile."

Before the Kid had grown large enough to knock out his father he had been compelled to learn the plumber's art. So now back to this honourable and useful profession he returned. But it was as an assistant that he engaged himself; and it is the master plumber and not the assistant who wears diamonds as large as hailstones and looks contemptuously upon the marble colonnades of Senator Clark's mansion.

Eight months went by as smoothly and surely as though they had

" elapsed " on a theatre programme. The Kid worked away at his pipes and solder with no symptoms of backsliding. The Stovepipe Gang continued its piracy on the high avenues, cracked policemen's heads, held up late travellers, invented new methods of peaceful plundering, copied Fifth Avenue's cut of clothes and neckwear fancies, and comported itself according to its lawless by-laws. But the Kid stood firm and faithful to his Molly, even though the polish was gone from his finger-nails and it took him fifteen minutes to tie his purple silk ascot so that the worn places would not show.

One evening he brought a mysterious bundle with him to Molly's house.

" Open that, Moll ! " he said in his large, quiet way. " It's for you."

Molly's eager fingers tore off the wrappings. She shrieked aloud, and in rushed a sprinkling of little McKeevers, and Ma McKeever, dishwashy, but an undeniable relative of the late Mrs. Eve.

Again Molly shrieked, and something dark and long and sinuous flew and enveloped her neck like an anaconda.

" Russian sables," said the Kid pridefully, enjoying the sight of Molly's round cheek against the clinging fur. " The real thing. They don't grow anything in Russia too good for you, Moll."

Molly plunged her hands into the muff, overturned a row of the family infants and flew to the mirror. Hint for the beauty column. To make bright eyes, rosy cheeks and a bewitching smile : Recipe—one set Russian sables. Apply.

When they were alone Molly became aware of a small cake of the ice of common sense floating down the full tide of her happiness.

" You're a bird, all right, Kid," she admitted gratefully. " I never had any furs on before in my life. But ain't Russian sables awful expensive ? Seems to me I've heard they were."

" Have I ever chucked any bargain-sale stuff at you, Moll ? " asked the Kid, with calm dignity. " Did you ever notice me leaning on the remnant counter or peering in the window of the five-and-ten ? Call that scarf $250 and the muff $175 and you won't make any mistake about the price of Russian sables. The swell goods for me. Say, they look fine on you, Moll."

Molly hugged the sables to her bosom in rapture. And then her smile went away little by little, and she looked the Kid straight in the eye sadly and steadily.

He knew what every look of hers meant; and he laughed with a faint flush upon his face.

"Cut it out," he said, with affectionate roughness. "I told you I was done with that. I bought 'em and paid for 'em all right, with my own money!"

"Out of the money you worked for, Kid? Out of $75 a month?"

"Sure. I been saving up."

"Let's see—saved $425 in eight months, Kid?"

"Ah, let up," said the Kid, with some heat. "I had some money when I went to work. Do you think I've been holding 'em up again? I told you I'd quit. They're paid for on the square. Put 'em on and come out for a walk."

Molly calmed her doubts. Sables are soothing. Proud as a queen she went forth in the streets at the Kid's side. In all that region of low-lying streets Russian sables had never been seen before. The word sped, and doors and windows blossomed with heads eager to see the swell furs Kid Brady had given his girl. All down the street there were "Oh's" and "Ah's," and the reported fabulous sum paid for the sables was passed from lip to lip, increasing as it went. At her right elbow sauntered the Kid, with the air of princes. Work had not diminished his love of pomp and show and his passion for the costly and genuine. On a corner they saw a group of the Stovepipe Gang loafing, immaculate. They raised their hats to the Kid's girl and went on with their calm, unaccented palaver.

Three blocks behind the admired couple strolled Detective Ransom, of the Central Office. Ransom was the only detective on the force who could walk abroad with safety in the Stovepipe district. He was fair dealing and unafraid, and went there with the hypothesis that the inhabitants were human. Many liked him, and now and then one would tip off to him something that he was looking for.

"What's the excitement down the street?" asked Ransom of a pale youth in a red sweater.

"Dey're out rubberin' at a set of buffalo robes Kid Brady staked his girl to," answered the youth. "Some say he paid $900 for de skins. Dey're swell all right enough."

"I hear Brady has been working at his old trade for nearly a year," said the detective. "He doesn't travel with the gang any more, does he?"

"He's workin', all right," said the red sweater, "but—say, sport,

are you trailin' anything in the fur line? A job in a plumbin' shop don't match wid dem skins de Kid's girl's got on."

Ransom overtook the strolling couple on an empty street near the river bank. He touched the Kid's arm from behind.

"Let me see you a moment, Brady," he said quietly. His eye rested for a second on the long fur scarf thrown stylishly back over Molly's left shoulder. The Kid, with his old-time police-hating frown on his face, stepped a yard or two aside with the detective.

"Did you go to Mrs. Hethcote's on West 7th Street yesterday to fix a leaky water-pipe?" asked Ransom.

"I did," said the Kid. "What of it?"

"The lady's $1000 set of Russian sables went out of the house about the same time you did. The description fits the ones this lady has on."

"To h—Harlem with you," cried the Kid angrily. "You know I've cut out that sort of thing, Ransom. I bought them sables yesterday at——"

The Kid stopped short.

"I know you've been working straight lately," said Ransom. "I'll give you every chance. I'll go with you where you say you bought the furs and investigate. The lady can wear 'em along with us and nobody'll be on. That's fair, Brady."

"Come on," agreed the Kid hotly. And then he stopped suddenly in his tracks and looked with an odd smile at Molly's distressed and anxious face.

"No use," he said grimly. "They're the Hethcote sables, all right. You'll have to turn 'em over, Moll, but they ain't too good for you if they cost a million."

Molly, with anguish in her face, hung upon the Kid's arm.

"Oh, Kiddy, you've broke my heart," she said. "I was so proud of you—and now they'll do you—and where's our happiness gone?"

"Go home," said the Kid wildly. "Come on, Ransom—take the furs. Let's get away from here. Wait a minute—I've a good mind to—no, I'll be d—— if I can do it—run along, Moll—I'm ready, Ransom."

Around the corner of a lumber-yard came Policeman Kohen on his way to his beat along the river. The detective signed to him for assistance. Kohen joined the group. Ransom explained.

"Sure," said Kohen. "I hear about those saples dat vas stole. You say you have dem here?"

Policeman Kohen took the end of Molly's late scarf in his hands and looked at it closely.

"Once," he said, "I sold furs in Sixth Avenue. Yes, dese are saples. Dey come from Alaska. Dis scarf is vort $12 and dis muff——"

"Biff!" came the palm of the Kid's powerful hand upon the policeman's mouth. Kohen staggered and rallied. Molly screamed. The detective threw himself upon Brady and with Kohen's aid got the nippers on his wrist.

"The scarf is vort $12 and the muff is vort $9," persisted the policeman. "Vot is dis talk about $1000 saples?"

The Kid sat upon a pile of lumber and his face turned dark red.

"Correct, Solomonski!" he declared viciously. "I paid $21.50 for the set. I'd rather have got six months and not have told it. Me, the swell guy that wouldn't look at anything cheap! I'm a plain bluffer. Moll—my salary couldn't spell sables in Russian."

Molly cast herself upon his neck.

"What do I care for all the sables and money in the world," she cried. "It's my Kiddy I want. Oh, you dear, stuck-up, crazy blockhead!"

"You can take dose nippers off," said Kohen to the detective. "Before I leaf de station de report come in dat de lady vind her saples —hanging in her wardrobe. Young man, I excuse you dat punch in my vace—dis von time."

Ransom handed Molly her furs. Her eyes were smiling upon the Kid. She wound the scarf and threw the end over her left shoulder with a duchess's grace.

"A gouple of young vools," said Policeman Kohen to Ransom: "come on away."

LOST ON DRESS PARADE

"O. Henry"

MR. Towers Chandler was pressing his evening suit in his hall bedroom. One iron was heating on a small gas stove; the other was being pushed vigorously back and forth to make the desirable crease that would be seen later on, extending in straight lines from Mr. Chandler's patent leather shoes to the edge of his low-cut vest. So much of the hero's toilet may be entrusted to our confidence. The remainder may be guessed by those whom genteel poverty has driven to ignoble expedient. Our next view of him shall be as he descends the steps of his lodging-house immaculately and correctly clothed; calm, assured, handsome—in appearance the typical New York young clubman setting out, slightly bored, to inaugurate the pleasures of the evening.

Chandler's honorarium was $18 per week. He was employed in the office of an architect. He was twenty-two years old; he considered architecture to be truly an art; and he honestly believed, though he would not have dared to admit it in New York—that the Flatiron Building was inferior in design to the great cathedral in Milan.

Out of each week's earnings Chandler set aside $1. At the end of each ten weeks, with the extra capital thus accumulated he purchased one gentleman's evening from the bargain counter of stingy old Father Time. He arrayed himself in the regalia of millionaires and presidents; he took himself to the quarter where life is brightest and showiest, and there dined with taste and luxury. With ten dollars a man may, for a few hours, play the wealthy idler to perfection. The sum is ample for a well-considered meal, a bottle bearing a respectable label, commensurate tips, a smoke, cab fare and the ordinary etceteras.

This one delectable evening culled from each dull seventy was to Chandler a source of renascent bliss. To the society bud comes but one debut; it stands alone sweet in her memory when her hair has whitened; but to Chandler each ten weeks brought a joy as keen,

as thrilling, as new as the first had been. To sit among bon vivants under palms in the swirl of concealed music, to look upon the habitués of such a paradise and to be looked upon by them—what is a girl's first dance and short-sleeved tulle compared with this?

Up Broadway Chandler moved with the vespertine dress parade. For this evening he was an exhibit as well as a gazer. For the next sixty-nine evenings he would be dining in cheviot and worsted at dubious table d'hôte, at whirlwind lunch counters, on sandwiches and beer in his hall bedroom. He was willing to do that, for he was a true son of the great city of razzle-dazzle, and to him one evening in the limelight made up for many dark ones.

Chandler protracted his walk until the Forties began to intersect the great and glittering primrose way, for the evening was yet young, and when one is of the beau monde only one day in seventy, one loves to protract the pleasure. Eyes bright, sinister, curious, admiring, provocative, alluring were bent upon him, for his garb and air proclaimed him a devotee to the hour of solace and pleasure.

At a certain corner he came to a standstill, proposing to himself the question of turning back toward the showy and fashionable restaurant in which he usually dined on the evenings of his especial luxury. Just then a girl scudded lightly around the corner, slipped on a patch of icy snow and fell plump upon the sidewalk.

Chandler assisted her to her feet with instant and solicitous courtesy. The girl hobbled to the wall of the building, leaned against it, and thanked him demurely.

"I think my ankle is strained," she said. "It twisted when I fell."

"Does it pain you much?" inquired Chandler.

"Only when I rest my weight upon it. I think I will be able to walk in a minute or two."

"If I can be of any further service," suggested the young man, "I will call a cab, or——"

"Thank you," said the girl, softly but heartily. "I am sure you need not trouble yourself any further. It was so awkward of me. And my shoe heels are horridly common-sense; I can't blame them at all."

Chandler looked at the girl and found her swiftly drawing his interest. She was pretty in a refined way; and her eye was both merry and kind. She was inexpensively clothed in a plain black dress

that suggested a sort of uniform such as shop girls wear. Her glossy dark-brown hair showed its coils beneath a cheap hat of black straw whose only ornament was a velvet ribbon and bow. She could have posed as a model for the self-respecting working girl of the best type.

A sudden idea came into the head of the young architect. He would ask this girl to dine with him. Here was the element that his splendid but solitary periodic feasts had lacked. His brief season of elegant luxury would be doubly enjoyable if he could add to it a lady's society. This girl was a lady, he was sure—her manner and speech settled that. And in spite of her extremely plain attire he felt that he would be pleased to sit at table with her.

These thoughts passed swiftly through his mind, and he decided to ask her. It was a breach of etiquette, of course, but oftentimes wage-earning girls waived formalities in matters of this kind. They were generally shrewd judges of men; and thought better of their own judgment than they did of useless conventions. His ten dollars, discreetly expended, would enable the two to dine very well indeed. The dinner would no doubt be a wonderful experience thrown into the dull routine of the girl's life; and her lively appreciation of it would add to his own triumph and pleasure.

"I think," he said to her, with frank gravity, "that your foot needs a longer rest than you suppose. Now, I am going to suggest a way in which you can give it that and at the same time do me a favour. I was on my way to dine all by my lonely self when you came tumbling around the corner. You come with me and we'll have a cozy dinner and a pleasant talk together, and by that time your game ankle will carry you home very nicely, I am sure."

The girl looked quickly up into Chandler's clear, pleasant countenance. Her eyes twinkled once very brightly, and then she smiled ingenuously.

"But we don't know each other—it wouldn't be right, would it?" she said doubtfully.

"There is nothing wrong about it," said the young man candidly. "I'll introduce myself — permit me — Mr. Towers Chandler. After our dinner, which I will try to make as pleasant as possible, I will bid you good-evening, or attend you safely to your door, whichever you prefer."

"But, dear me!" said the girl, with a glance at Chandler's faultless attire. "In this old dress and hat!".

"Never mind that," said Chandler cheerfully. "I'm sure you look more charming in them than any one we shall see in the most elaborate dinner toilette."

"My ankle does hurt yet," admitted the girl, attempting a limping step. "I think I will accept your invitation, Mr. Chandler. You may call me Miss Marian."

"Come then, Miss Marian," said the young architect gaily, but with perfect courtesy; "you will not have far to walk. There is a very respectable and good restaurant in the next block. You will have to lean on my arm—so—and walk slowly. It is lonely dining all by one's self. I'm just a little bit glad that you slipped on the ice."

When the two were established at a well-appointed table, with a promising waiter hovering in attendance, Chandler began to experience the real joy that his regular outings always brought to him.

The restaurant was not so showy or pretentious as the one further down Broadway, which he always preferred, but it was nearly so. The tables were well filled with prosperous-looking diners, there was a good orchestra, playing softly enough to make conversation a possible pleasure, and the cuisine and service were beyond criticism. His companion, even in her cheap hat and dress, held herself with an air that added distinction to the natural beauty of her face and figure. And it is certain that she looked at Chandler, with his animated but self-possessed manner and his kindling and frank blue eyes, with something not far from admiration in her own charming face.

Then it was that the Madness of Manhattan, the Frenzy of Fuss and Feathers, the Bacillus of Brag, the Provincial Plague of Pose seized upon Towers Chandler. He was on Broadway, surrounded by pomp and style, and there were eyes to look at him. On the stage of that comedy he had assumed to play the one-night part of a butterfly of fashion and an idler of means and taste. He was dressed for the part, and all his good angels had not the power to prevent him from acting it.

So he began to prate to Miss Marian of clubs, of teas, of golf and riding and kennels and cotillions and tours abroad, and threw out hints of a yacht lying at Larchmont. He could see that she was vastly impressed by this vague talk, so he endorsed his pose by random insinuations concerning great wealth, and mentioned familiarly a few names that are handled reverently by the proletariat. It was

Chandler's short little day, and he was wringing from it the best that could be had, as he saw it. And yet once or twice he saw the pure gold of this girl shine through the mist that his egotism had raised between him and all objects.

" This way of living that you speak of," she said, " sounds so futile and purposeless. Haven't you any work to do in the world that might interest you more ? "

" My dear Miss Marian," he exclaimed—" work ! Think of dressing every day for dinner, of making half a dozen calls in an afternoon—with a policeman at every corner ready to jump into your auto and take you to the station, if you get up any greater speed than a donkey cart's gait. We do-nothings are the hardest workers in the land."

The dinner was concluded, the waiter generously fed, and the two walked out to the corner where they had met. Miss Marian walked very well now ; her limp was scarcely noticeable.

" Thank you for a nice time," she said frankly. " I must run home now. I liked the dinner very much, Mr. Chandler."

He shook hands with her, smiling cordially, and said something about a game of bridge at his club. He watched her for a moment, walking rather rapidly eastward, and then he found a cab to drive him slowly homeward.

In his chilly bedroom Chandler laid away his evening clothes for a sixty-nine days' rest. He went about it thoughtfully.

" That was a stunning girl," he said to himself. " She's all right, too, I'd be sworn, even if she does have to work. Perhaps if I'd told her the truth instead of all that razzle-dazzle we might—but, confound it ! I had to play up to my clothes."

Thus spoke the brave who was born and reared in the wigwams of the tribe of the Manhattans.

The girl, after leaving her entertainer, sped swiftly cross-town until she arrived at a handsome and sedate mansion two squares to the east, facing on that avenue which is the highway of Mammon and the auxiliary gods. Here she entered hurriedly and ascended to a room where a handsome young lady in an elaborate house dress was looking anxiously out the window.

" Oh, you madcap ! " exclaimed the elder girl, when the other entered. " When will you quit frightening us this way ? It is two hours since you ran out in that old rag of a dress and Marie's hat.

Mamma has been so alarmed. She sent Louis in the auto to try to find you. You are a bad, thoughtless Puss."

The elder girl touched a button, and a maid came in a moment.

"Marie, tell mamma that Miss Marian has returned."

"Don't scold, sister. I only ran down to Mme. Theo's to tell her to use mauve insertion instead of pink. My costume and Marie's hat were just what I needed. Every one thought I was a shopgirl, I am sure."

"Dinner is over, dear; you stayed so late."

"I know. I slipped on the sidewalk and turned my ankle. I could not walk, so I hobbled into a restaurant and sat there until I was better. That is why I was so long."

The two girls sat in the window seat, looking out at the lights and the stream of hurrying vehicles in the avenue. The younger one cuddled down with her head in her sister's lap.

"We will have to marry some day," she said dreamily—"both of us. We have so much money that we will not be allowed to disappoint the public. Do you want me to tell you the kind of a man I could love, Sis?"

"Go on, you scatterbrain," smiled the other.

"I could love a man with dark and kind blue eyes, who is gentle and respectful to poor girls, who is handsome and good and does not try to flirt. But I could love him only if he had an ambition, an object, some work to do in the world. I would not care how poor he was if I could help him build his way up. But sister, dear, the kind of man we always meet—the man who lives an idle life between society and his clubs—I could not love a man like that, even if his eyes were blue and he were ever so kind to poor girls whom he met in the street."

ROSES, RUSES AND ROMANCE

"O. Henry"

RAVENEL—Ravenel, the traveller, artist and poet, threw his magazine to the floor. Sammy Brown, broker's clerk, who sat by the window, jumped.

"What is it, Ravvy?" he asked. "The critics been hammering your stock down?"

"Romance is dead," said Ravenel lightly. When Ravenel spoke lightly he was generally serious. He picked up the magazine and fluttered its leaves.

"Even a Philistine, like you, Sammy," said Ravenel seriously (a tone that ensured him to be speaking lightly), "ought to understand. Now, here is a magazine that once printed Poe and Lowell and Whitman and Bret Harte and Du Maurier and Lanier and—well, that gives you the idea. The current number has this literary feast to set before you: an article on the stokers and coal bunkers of battleships, an exposé of the methods employed in making liverwurst, a continued story of a Standard Preferred International Baking Powder deal in Wall Street, a 'poem' on the bear that the President missed, another 'story' by a young woman who spent a week as a spy making overalls on the East Side, another 'fiction' story that reeks of the 'garage' and a certain make of automobile. Of course the title contains the words 'Cupid' and 'Chauffeur'—an article on naval strategy illustrated with cuts of the Spanish Armada, and the new Staten Island ferry-boats; another story of a political boss who won the love of a Fifth Avenue belle by blackening her eye and refusing to vote for an iniquitous ordinance (it doesn't say whether it was in the Street Cleaning Department or Congress), and nineteen pages by the editors bragging about the circulation. The whole thing, Sammy, is an obituary on Romance."

Sammy Brown sat comfortably in the leather armchair by the open window. His suit was a vehement brown with visible checks, beautifully matched in shade by the ends of four cigars that his vest pocket poorly concealed. Light tan were his shoes, grey his socks,

sky-blue his apparent linen, snowy and high and adamantine his collar, against which a black butterfly had alighted and spread his wings. Sammy's face—least important—was round and pleasant and pinkish, and in his eyes you saw no haven for fleeing Romance.

That window of Ravenel's apartment opened upon an old garden full of ancient trees and shrubbery. The apartment-house towered above one side of it; a high brick wall fended it from the street; opposite Ravenel's window an old, old mansion stood, half hidden in the shade of the summer foliage. The house was a castle besieged. The city howled and roared and shrieked and beat upon its double doors, and shook white, fluttering cheques above the walls, offering terms of surrender. The grey dust settled upon the trees; the siege was pressed hotter, but the drawbridge was not lowered. No further will the language of chivalry serve. Inside lived an old gentleman who loved his home and did not wish to sell it. That is all the romance of the besieged castle.

Three or four times every week came Sammy Brown to Ravenel's apartment. He belonged to the poet's club, for the former Browns had been conspicuous, though Sammy had been vulgarised by Business. He had no tears for departed Romance. The song of the ticker was the one that reached his heart, and when it came to matters equine and batting scores he was something of a pink edition. He loved to sit in the leather armchair by Ravenel's window. And Ravenel didn't mind particularly. Sammy seemed to enjoy his talk; and then the broker's clerk was such a perfect embodiment of modernity and the day's sordid practicality, that Ravenel rather liked to use him as a scapegoat.

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you," said Sammy, with the shrewdness that business had taught him. "The magazine has turned down some of your poetry stunts. That's why you are sore at it."

"That would be a good guess in Wall Street or in a campaign for the presidency of a woman's club," said Ravenel quietly. "Now, there is a poem—if you will allow me to call it that—of my own in this number of the magazine."

"Read it to me," said Sammy, watching a cloud of pipe-smoke he had just blown out the window.

Ravenel was no greater than Achilles. No one is. There is bound to be a spot. The Somebody-or-Other must take hold of us

somewhere when she dips us in the Something-or-Other that makes us invulnerable. He read aloud this verse in the magazine:

"THE FOUR ROSES

"One rose I twined within your hair—
(White rose, that spake of worth);
And one you placed upon your breast—
(Red rose, love's seal of birth).
You plucked another from its stem—
(Tea rose, that means for aye);
And one you gave—that bore for me
The thorns of memory."

"That's a crackerjack," said Sammy admiringly.

"There are five more verses," said Ravenel, patiently sardonic. "One naturally pauses at the end of each. Of course——"

"Oh, let's have the rest, old man," shouted Sammy contritely, "I didn't mean to cut you off. I'm not much of a poetry expert, you know. I never saw a poem that didn't look like it ought to have terminal facilities at the end of every verse. Reel off the rest of it."

Ravenel sighed, and laid the magazine down. "All right," said Sammy cheerfully, "we'll have it next time. I'll be off now. Got a date at five o'clock."

He took a last look at the shaded green garden and left, whistling in an off key an untuneful air from a roofless farce comedy.

The next afternoon Ravenel, while polishing a ragged line of a new sonnet, reclined by the window overlooking the besieged garden of the unmercenary baron. Suddenly he sat up, spilling two rhymes and a syllable or two.

Through the trees one window of the old mansion could be seen clearly. In its window, draped in flowing white, leaned the angel of all his dreams of romance and poesy. Young, fresh as a drop of dew, graceful as a spray of clematis, conferring upon the garden hemmed in by the roaring traffic the air of a princess's bower, beautiful as any flower sung by poet—thus Ravenel saw her for the first time. She lingered for a while, and then disappeared within, leaving a few notes of a birdlike ripple of song to reach his entranced ears through the rattle of cabs and the snarling of the electric cars.

Thus, as if to challenge the poet's flaunt at romance and to punish him for his recreancy to the undying spirit of youth and beauty, this vision had dawned upon him with a thrilling and accusive power.

And so metabolic was the power, that in an instant the atoms of Ravenel's entire world were redistributed. The laden drays that passed the house in which she lived rumbled a deep double-bass to the tune of love. The newsboys' shouts were the notes of singing birds; that garden was the pleasance of the Capulets; the janitor was an ogre; himself a knight, ready with sword, lance or lute.

Thus does romance show herself amid forests of brick and stone when she gets lost in the city, and there has to be sent out a general alarm to find her again.

At four in the afternoon Ravenel looked out across the garden. In the window of his hopes were set four small vases, each containing a great, full-blown rose—red and white. And, as he gazed, she leaned above them, shaming them with her loveliness and seeming to direct her eyes pensively toward his own window. And then, as though she had caught his respectful but ardent regard, she melted away, leaving the fragrant emblems on the window-sill.

"Yes, emblems!—he would be unworthy if he had not understood. She had read his poem, 'The Four Roses'; it had reached her heart; and this was its romantic answer. Of course, she must know that Ravenel, the poet, lived across her garden. His picture, too, she must have seen in the magazines. The delicate, tender, modest, flattering message could not be ignored."

Ravenel noticed beside the roses a small flowering-pot containing a plant. Without shame he brought his opera-glasses and employed them from the cover of his window-curtain. A nutmeg geranium!

With the true poetic instinct he dragged a book of useless information from his shelves, and tore open the leaves at "The Language of Flowers."

"Geranium, Nutmeg—I expect a meeting."

So! Romance never does things by halves. If she comes back to you she brings gifts and her knitting, and will sit in your chimney-corner if you will let her.

And now Ravenel smiled. The lover smiles when he thinks he has won. The woman who loves ceases to smile with victory. He ends a battle; she begins hers. What a pretty idea to set the four roses in her window for him to see! She must have a sweet, poetic soul. And now to contrive the meeting.

A whistling and slamming of doors preluded the coming of Sammy Brown.

Ravenel smiled again. Even Sammy Brown was shone upon by the far-flung rays of the renaissance. Sammy, with his ultra clothes, his horseshoe pin, his plump face, his trite slang, his uncomprehending admiration of Ravenel—the broker's clerk made an excellent foil to the new, bright, unseen visitor to the poet's sombre apartment.

Sammy went to his old seat by the window, and looked out over the dusty green foliage in the garden. Then he looked at his watch, and rose hastily.

"By grabs!" he exclaimed. "Twenty after four! I can't stay, old man; I've got a date at 4.30."

"Why did you come, then," asked Ravenel, with sarcastic jocularity, "if you had an engagement at that time? I thought you business men kept better account of your minutes and seconds than that."

Sammy hesitated in the doorway and turned pinker.

"Fact is, Ravvy," he explained, as to a customer whose margin is exhausted, "I didn't know I had it till I came. I'll tell you, old man—there's a dandy girl in that old house next door that I'm dead gone on. I put it straight—we're engaged. The old man says 'nit' —but that don't go. He keeps her pretty close. I can see Edith's window from yours here. She gives me a tip when she's going shopping, and I meet her. It's 4.30 to-day. Maybe I ought to have explained sooner, but I know it's all right with you—so long."

"How do you get your 'tip,' as you call it?" asked Ravenel, losing a little spontaneity from his smile.

"Roses," said Sammy briefly. "Four of 'em to-day. Means four o'clock at the corner of Broadway and Twenty-third."

"But the geranium?" persisted Ravenel, clutching at the end of flying Romance's trailing robe.

"Means half-past," shouted Sammy from the hall. "See you to-morrow."

"LITTLE SPECK IN GARNERED FRUIT"

"O. Henry"

THE honeymoon was at its full. There was a flat with the reddest of new carpets, tasselled portières and six steins with pewter lids arranged on a ledge above the wainscoting of the dining-room. The wonder of it was yet upon them. Neither of them had ever seen a yellow primrose by the river's brim; but if such a sight had met their eyes at that time it would have seemed like—well, whatever the poet expected the right kind of people to see in it besides a primrose.

The bride sat in the rocker with her feet resting upon the world. She was wrapt in rosy dreams and a kimono of the same hue. She wondered what the people in Greenland and Tasmania and Baluchistan were saying one to another about her marriage to Kid McGarry. Not that it made any difference. There was no welter-weight from London to the Southern Cross that could stand up four hours—no; four rounds—with her bridegroom. And he had been hers for three weeks; and the crook of her little finger could sway him more than the fist of any 142-pounder in the world.

Love, when it is ours, is the other name for self-abnegation and sacrifice. When it belongs to people across the airshaft it means arrogance and self-conceit.

The bride crossed her Oxfords and looked thoughtfully at the distemper Cupids on the ceiling.

"Precious," said she, with the air of Cleopatra asking Antony for Rome done up in tissue paper and delivered at residence, "I think I would like a peach."

Kid McGarry arose and put on his coat and hat. He was serious, shaven, sentimental, and spry.

"All right," said he, as coolly as though he were only agreeing to sign articles to fight the champion of England. "I'll step down and cop one out for you—see?"

"Don't be long," said the bride. "I'll be lonesome without my naughty boy. Get a nice, ripe one."

After a series of farewells that would have befitted an imminent voyage to foreign parts, the Kid went down to the street.

Here he not unreasonably hesitated, for the season was yet early spring, and there seemed small chance of wresting anywhere from those chill streets and stores the coveted luscious guerdon of summer's golden prime.

At the Italian's fruit-stand on the corner he stopped and cast a contemptuous eye over the display of papered oranges, highly polished apples and wan, sun-hungry bananas.

"Gotta da peach? asked the Kid in the tongue of Dante, the lover of lovers.

"Ah, no," sighed the vender. "Not for one mont com-a da peach. Too soon. Gotta da nice-a orange. Like-a da orange?"

Scornful, the Kid pursued his quest. He entered the all-night chop-house, café, and bowling-alley of his friend and admirer, Justus O'Callahan. The O'Callahan was about in his institution, looking for leaks.

"I want it straight," said the Kid to him. "The old woman has got a hunch that she wants a peach. Now, if you've got a peach, Cal, get it out quick. I want it and others like it if you've got 'em in plural quantities."

"The house is yours," said O'Callahan. "But there's no peach in it. It's too soon. I don't suppose you could even find 'em at one of the Broadway joints. That's too bad. When a lady fixes her mouth for a certain kind of fruit nothing else won't do. It's too late now to find any of the first-class fruiterers open. But if you think the missis would like some nice oranges, I've just got a box of fine ones in that she might——"

"Much obliged, Cal. It's a peach proposition right from the ring of the gong. I'll try farther."

The time was nearly midnight as the Kid walked down the West-Side avenue. Few stores were open, and such as were practically hooted at the idea of a peach.

But in her moated flat the bride confidently awaited her Persian fruit. A champion welter-weight not find a peach?—not stride triumphantly over the seasons and the zodiac and the almanac to fetch an Amsden's June or a Georgia cling to his owny-own?

The Kid's eye caught sight of a window that was lighted and gorgeous with Nature's most entrancing colours. The light suddenly

went out. The Kid sprinted and caught the fruiterer locking his door.

"Peaches?" said he, with extreme deliberation.

"Well, no, sir. Not for three or four weeks yet. I haven't any idea where you might find some. There may be a few in town from under the glass, but they'd be hard to locate. Maybe at one of the more expensive hotels—some place where there's plenty of money to waste. I've got some very fine oranges, though—from a shipload that came in to-day."

The Kid lingered on the corner for a moment, and then set out briskly toward a pair of green lights that flanked the steps of a building down a dark side street.

"Captain around anywhere?" he asked of the desk sergeant of the police station.

At that moment the Captain came briskly forward from the rear. He was in plain clothes, and had a busy air.

"Hello, Kid," he said to the pugilist. "Thought you were bridal-touring?"

"Got back yesterday. I'm a solid citizen now. Think I'll take an interest in municipal doings. How would it suit you to get into Denver Dick's place to-night, Cap?"

"Past performances," said the Captain, twisting his moustache. "Denver was closed up two months ago."

"Correct," said the Kid. "Rafferty chased him out of the Forty-third. He's running in your precinct now, and his game's bigger than ever. I'm down on this gambling business. I can put you against his game."

"In my precinct?" growled the Captain. "Are you sure, Kid? I'll take it as a favour. Have you got the entrée? How is it to be done?"

"Hammers," said the Kid. "They haven't got any steel on the doors yet. You'll need ten men. No; they won't let me in the place. Denver has been trying to do me. He thought I tipped him off for the other raid. I didn't though. You want to hurry. I've got to get back home. The house is only three blocks from here."

Before ten minutes had sped the Captain with a dozen men stole with their guide into the hallway of a dark and virtuous-looking building in which many businesses were conducted by day.

"Third floor, rear," said the Kid softly. "I'll lead the way."

Two axemen faced the door that he pointed out to them.

"It seems all quiet," said the Captain doubtfully. "Are you sure your tip is straight?"

"Cut away!" said the Kid. "It's on me if it ain't."

The axes crashed through the as yet unprotected door. A blaze of light from within poured through the smashed panels. The door fell, and the raiders sprang into the room with their guns handy.

The big room was furnished with the gaudy magnificence dear to Denver Dick's western ideas. Various well-patronised games were in progress. About fifty men who were in the room rushed upon the police in a grand break for personal liberty. The plain-clothes men had to do a little club-swinging. More than half the patrons escaped.

Denver Dick had graced his game with his own presence that night. He led the rush that was intended to sweep away the smaller body of raiders. But when he saw the Kid his manner became personal. Being in the heavy-weight class, he cast himself joyfully upon his slighter enemy, and they rolled down a flight of stairs in each other's arms. On the landing they separated and arose, and then the Kid was able to use some of his professional tactics, which had been useless to him while in the excited clutch of a 200-pound sporting gentleman who was about to lose $20,000 worth of paraphernalia.

After vanquishing his adversary, the Kid hurried upstairs and through the gambling-room into a smaller apartment connecting by an arched doorway.

Here was a long table set with choicest chinaware and silver, and lavishly furnished with food of that expensive and spectacular sort of which the devotees of sport are supposed to be fond. Here again was to be perceived the liberal and florid taste of the gentleman with the urban cognomenal prefix.

A No. 10 patent-leather shoe protruded a few of its inches outside the tablecloth along the floor. The Kid seized this, and plucked forth a black man in a white tie and the garb of a servitor.

"Get up!" commanded the Kid. "Are you in charge of this free lunch?"

"Yes, sah, I was. Has they done pinched us ag'in, boss?"

"Looks that way. Listen to me. Are there any peaches in this lay-out? If there ain't I'll have to throw up the sponge."

"There was three dozen, sah, when the game opened this evinin';

but I reckon the gentlemen done eat 'em all up. If you'd like to eat a fust-rate orange, sah, I kin find you some."

"Get busy," ordered the Kid sternly, "and move whatever peach crop you've got quick, or there'll be trouble. If anybody oranges me again to-night, I'll knock his face off."

The raid on Denver Dick's high-priced and prodigal luncheon revealed one lone, last peach that had escaped the epicurean jaws of the followers of chance. Into the Kid's pocket it went, and that indefatigable forager departed immediately with his prize. With scarcely a glance at the scene on the sidewalk below, where the officers were loading their prisoners into the patrol wagons, he moved homeward with long, swift strides.

His heart was light as he went. So rode the knights back to Camelot after perils and high deeds done for their ladies fair. The Kid's lady had commanded him and he had obeyed. True, it was but a peach that she had craved; but it had been no small deed to glean a peach at midnight from that wintry city where yet the February snows lay like iron. She had asked for a peach; she was his bride; in his pocket the peach was warming in his hand that held it for fear that it might fall out and be lost.

On the way the Kid turned in at an all-night drug store and said to the spectacled clerk:

"Say, sport, I wish you'd size up this rib of mine and see if it's broke. I was in a little scrap, and bumped down a flight or two of stairs."

The druggist made an examination.

"It isn't broken," was his diagnosis; "but you have a bruise there that looks like you'd fallen off the Flatiron twice."

"That's all right," said the Kid. "Let's have your clothes-brush, please."

The bride waited in the rosy glow of the pink lamp-shade. The miracles were not all passed away. By breathing a desire for some slight thing—a flower, a pomegranate, a—oh, yes, a peach—she could send forth her man into the night, into the world which could not withstand him, and he would do her bidding.

And now he stood by her chair and laid the peach in her hand.

"Naughty boy!" she said fondly. "Did I say a peach? I think I would much rather have had an orange."

Blest be the bride.

JAMES BRENDAN CONNOLLY
B. 1868

THE MAGNETIC HEARTH

"Clancy was laying his course that day,
Clipping it out o' Fortune Bay——"

and so on to the further details, the fifteen hundred barrels of frozen herring in his hold, and a breeze that sang lullabies of home, when one of his crew had to fall sick.

"And of all times!" exploded his mates. "The first cargo of the season; and now Glover'll beat us out—ready to sail when we left."

But there was nothing for it but to put back to St. Mary's and ship another man in his place.

The new man was but fairly over the rail—Man! but the jaunty chap he was!—when he had to break out with: "So this is the Tommie Clancy I've been hearing so much about? The great Tommie Clancy—Clancy the sail carrier! Well, I've yet to see the man that could carry sail enough for me."

Of course that was too good for the crew to keep; and while they were getting under way again they started to tell the skipper of what the new man had said, thinking to touch his professional pride and sting him to one of his famous rejoinders, perhaps set him to teach the fellow a lesson. But they were grievously disappointed. He did not let them half finish. "To the devil with what he said!" exploded the irate Clancy. He had only himself just leaped aboard, after seeing the sick man attended to ashore. "Look now!" and held up a letter. "Ought to have been given me a week ago. Only I stepped into the post-office on the way down, I'd never got it at all. If I'd got it when I ought to, we'd been half-way home by now, with that sick man taking his chances out of the medicine-chest. And more than that," and he held aloft a telegram, although, instead of telling them what that was about, he thrust it into an inside pocket.

"Hush!" warned one, a subtle one, a man who had essayed to report the new man's words about sail-carrying. "Maybe he's put out about Glover, who left for home last night," meaning it to reach the skipper's ears, which it did.

"To the devil with Glover!" said Clancy. "We won't be home any later because he's left before us."

"But the market, skipper?"

"To hell with the market, too—what's the matter with that anchor? Is that anchor cat-headed yet? No? Well, why isn't it? And another heave or two on those throat-halyards. And, Lord in heaven! bend your backs. Some o' you act as though you thought you were pulling on pack-threads."

And in that spirit they left for home. At dark they had sunk the headlands of Cannargie, at dawn they raised the cliffs of Whitehead, which truly was going some, as Sam Leary put it when after an arduous trick to the wheel he dropped below, dodging, as he leaped from the lowest step, the heavy steel stays which held the *Duncan* together forward. "Them damn things—some day they'll cut a man's head off coming below in a hurry."

"I cal'late by the way she's hoppin', Sammie, that it's blowin' some."

This from the cook.

"Go up and have a look for yourself, cookie, *Some* water on her deck."

"No need to go on deck to see loose water, Sam. I c'n get that here. I wish she was a little tighter. There's blessed little comfort wearin' rubber boots all the time below. Don't you think she's a bit loose for a winter passage, Sammie? Look at them things, now."

He pointed to the heavy strengthening stays which Sam had dodged, and which stretched across the forec's'le just abaft the butt of the foremast.

These rods, to which Sam had already referred, and of an X form, extended from side to side of the vessel. If it were not for them the *Duncan*, a notoriously hard-driven vessel, would (or so common report had it) have long ago ended her career. To stiffen further the *Duncan*, it may be added that she was also hooped by iron bands outside her hull; the same extending from chain-plates to chain-plates forward. Even as the men gazed, the steel stays, which crossed at the foremast, were quivering under the impact which came of the vessel plunging into heavy seas before an immense press of canvas.

"Some day, Sammie, them rods'll part, and then she'll split in two like a Boston cracker and down she'll go the farther from the cook."

" If, instead of swearing at them so much, cook, you'd once in a while take a marlinspike to the turnbuckle and screw 'em a little tighter—" Sam followed his own advice. " There; that looks better."

" But she *is* loose, Sammie."

" Loose? Of course she's loose. But that's no fault of hers. Look back at the passages she's made. Sure 'tisn't in nature for a vessel to be driven as this man's driven this one for years now and she not be loose. But that only affects a vessel's comfort. For sailin' 'tis no harm. Indeed, 'tis notorious that a loose vessel sails fastest."

" H-m-m—then this one ought to be about the fastest thing that ever wiped her nose in a winter westerly."

" And so she is. I'd hate to say what I think she's logging now, for fear of what you'd call me. But what odds if she is loose, so she's standin' up well? And she's standin' up—well enough to carry her mains'l anyway, and all the vessels that's carryin' a whole mains'l here-away to-day c'n be counted on the thumbs of a one-armed man, I'll bet."

" And no slack now, Sammie, till he's home, I s'pose? "

" Slack? Slack? " Leary looked into the cook's face to assure himself no joke was meant. " This man slack on a passage home? Well, if—there goes another bunch of crockery, cookie. You ought to know better than leave them around so careless—and the way this vessel's bein' jolted. If I know him, he's got a picture in his eye now of cradles and babies and a lone woman by the fire. No, sir, if it was blowin' 16-inch guns out of the water he wouldn't slack now."

And never a slack did Clancy think of. Cruel it certainly seemed. Wind just forward of her beam then, and so allowing of sheet enough to keep all the bouncing life in her. And the sea? She was picking it up over her knightheads and passing it along deck, smothering hatches, house, and wheel-box, and over the taffrail roaring.

" Like an express train on the other track," said the next man off watch after Leary. " Honest, I caught myself looking back at her wake to see if I couldn't see the cars going out of sight around the curve. Man! if she don't bust all the records this trip! "

And that started them to figuring out how long before she would be here, there, and finally into Gloucester, which is known of any old Gloucester fisherman to be the surest way to discount any good luck in store. It was only inevitable, then, that the vengeful wind

should jump to the westward. The skipper was the first to note the veering, and it was, " Blast your hoary old face !—can't you stay with a man in a hurry for two days running ? " And to the man at the wheel then, " Let her come about, and don't trip her, either."

Almost to Sable Island Northwest Light it was on that tack. Abreast of Cape Sable they hoped it would be on the inshore tack. But no ; the wind headed them off again and developed into a westerly hurricane, of which, between one tack and the other, they got thirty hours, she reeling off her express speed under four lowers the meantime. It was then her planks first gave warning. Clancy was not deaf to the indications. " But no fear ; she won't give in. I never could make her give in. She'll keep going, this one, till the planks are torn from her frame. That's the spirit of her. But here's this devil's breeze heading us off again."

It was on that next tack she showed herself the wonderful vessel altogether. And Clancy standing right there to see her.

" Did you ever see her like ? " he asked, and so fired with admiration of her that—she was carrying her four lowers then—he thought to try her with the staysail. And did. And she stood up under that ; not without some further creaking and groaning of her joints, it is true, but still right side up. " M-m ! " murmured Clancy, in sheer admiration, and after that gave her the balloon. Blue times it was then, spume and foam and a clawing sea — a great occasion altogether. Grand, yes—life well worth living ; and then—it was the forward watch who, thinking he heard an unusual gurgling overboard, stuck his head over her windward bow. And immediately hopped back with warning arms : " Skipper ! oh, skipper, she's all opened up for'ard ! "

" Then slap it to her on the other tack," said Clancy, and never even smiled, for the madness of making a passage was on him.

And while on that other tack came a glorious south-easterly, and riotous joy prevailed aboard the *Duncan*. A south-easterly gale for homebound vessels, especially in winter ! It is a softening, albeit at times a howling influence. Particularly does it add to the joy of man when it follows a hard westerly, serving then to melt the ice. And straight down the Cape shore went the *Duncan* before it, while Tommie Clancy, standing on her quarter, smiled the smile of a boy with a slice of bread and molasses. To Sam Leary's query, " Will you beat him out ? " he asked, " Beat who out ? "

"Why, Glover."

"Oh, him! Twelve hours' start? I don't know. And what's more, Sammie, I don't know's I care. We're sailing now, that's sure," and the frequent seas threatening to overhaul and smother her, he took the wheel himself; and for fourteen hours stood to it, lifting a hand from the spokes only to gulp down the cups of hot coffee which were brought when chance offered. And sang little songs to himself the while—songs of home, and hearth, and wife, and children—songs the Celtic people sing as the mother rocks the babies, the fathers as they meditate on life, death, and what comes after.

In the milder spells of that run the water on her quarter piled to Clancy's thighs, but later it came to his waist; and there was one inspiring stretch of four hours when the solid water came boiling to his breast. And a man of sweeping height was Clancy. She must have been a sight to please the gods; certainly she was a joy to all she met along the way. They breasted a fleet of outbound trawlers hove to inside La Have, under double-reefed foresails all. To the rail of one, the *Buccaneer*, stood Crump Taylor.

"What is it?" hailed Crump.

"I don't know," yelled back Tommie, "but I'll know before a great while an' this breeze holds out."

"Well, what's your hurry?" asked the master of the next one, which herself rocked to the sea's surge till her fore-keel could be seen to the waist.

"Oh, no great hurry—just going to the west'ard," retorted Clancy.

"Excuse *me*!" said that one.

"Drive her!" yelled the next. On the *Duncan* they couldn't hear the words, so rapidly was she sweeping by; but they knew what he meant by the swishing sweep of his oil-clothed arm.

Not until they rounded Cape Sable and were getting the wind fair abeam did Clancy give over the wheel. After three days and nights on his feet he was beginning to feel the need of rest. It was three o'clock in the morning then.

"Keep her as she is—nothing to. If anything, keep her off. If I don't wake before, call me at seven," and turned in on the lockers.

But they didn't have to call him, for in his sleep he felt the unusual motion. He rolled to his side and waited. A moment and she came up almost standing; another moment and she was tearing away. A minute or two and she was brought up again; another and she was

off. Clancy stood up. The clock indicated a few minutes after six. Two or three of the crew, expecting the call to coffee—there had been no table since the beginning of the westerly—were already sitting around on the lockers. Again she fetched up, and again she was off again.

" How's it above ? " asked Clancy.

" 'Bout the same ; maybe a breath more wind, if anything."

" Has it been going on for long, that luffing ? "

" Since this man's had the wheel."

The unusual readiness to fix the blame arrested Clancy's attention. Forgetfully he lowered his head to look up the companion-way to see who it was ; but the boards which two days before had been set up to keep the deck water from the cabin were still there, and the man to the wheel could not be seen.

" And who is it ? "

They were more than willing to tell him. " It's the sail-carrier you shipped in Fortune Bay."

" Oh-h——"

" And now that he's to the wheel, his eyes are white with fear of the world to come."

Clancy said nothing, but presently went on deck ; and there stood by the wheel and casually observed the progress of things. No getting around it, 'twas a wild-looking morning for a vessel to be carrying all the sail she had in her locker.

With the master at his side the new man kept his nerve for perhaps five minutes, by which time he could stand it no more. In the face of a mountainous sea that looked as if it was surely going to engulf them, he hurriedly put down the wheel. Even while the wave was sweeping her decks, ere yet it had passed on, with its grand backwash receding musically down her sloping deck, Clancy was warning his helmsman.

" Don't do that. Keep her to the course—nothing to. If anything, keep her off. A good full always to keep the life in her. That kind of work discourages a vessel ; she's going home, mind."

" Yes, sir," and on her course again was the *Duncan* put. And for perhaps another five minutes the new man held her to it ; but the prospect proving too much for him, again he luffed her.

Clancy laid a gentle arm on the wheelsman's shoulder and spoke softly.

" I told you not to do that, and you mustn't. Don't do it again.

This one's a little loose maybe, but she'll take all you can give her. I know her better than you, mind, and I'm telling you to trust her. And even if she wasn't reliable, which she is, mind—this is no time for jogging. We're going home, going home, boy, and a good full's what she wants."

After that Clancy thought the man was cured. But no. Five minutes perhaps and again she was luffed.

Clancy laid a hand on the wheel. "You needn't bother about steering any more. I'll stand your watch out, and do you go below. And if you'll take my advice, and no offence meant, when you get to Gloucester you'll take to farming; for cert'nly the Lord never intended you for a fisherman."

Be sure they heard that below—an ear to the binnacle-box assured it; and when he came below among them furtive glances stole around the company. But, like gentlemen, they said never a word. Nor did he then; only sat down on a locker and drew off his oilskins, first his jacket and trousers, then followed his jack-boots, wearily, and got into his slipshods, after which he reached back and from under the mattress of his bunk drew out a plug of tobacco and rolled it in the palms of his hands, and filled his pipe, and stretched his feet then toward the stove.

In which position he smoked meditatively, and, after a while—puff—puff—and a great sigh: "Well, I've crossed the Bay of Fundy a hundred times, but this is the first time ever I crossed under water."

The disrated helmsman's mate was at that time forward, considering how foolish it was to attempt to stand watch at all. He was making no pretension to look out; simply curled up and waited for his hour to come to an end.

"And I might's well been below for all the good I was doing," he explained when he did get below. "Might as well lock her up forward and let her go her way, for it's nothing but a solid ledge of clear white water ahead of her, and into that she's everlastin'ly pilin'."

"And how's the skipper? Looking tired yet?"

"Him tired? And the vessel goin' to the west'ard! Man! he's just beginnin' to beam!"

"Still singin' the little songs to himself, rhymin' as he goes along?"

"Ay, still singin',

"West half no'the and drive her, we're abreast now of Cape Sable,
'Tis an everlastin' hurricane, but here's the craft that's able"—

singin' away, and his eyes shinin' like Thacher's after you've come a passage from Flemish Cap."

The prospect by and by moved Sam Leary to ascend to the deck, where his eyes at once caught a faint column of smoke. "That the Yarmouth steamer, skipper, down to le'ward?"

"That's the old lady, Sam. Raised her at seven o'clock this morning, and by twelve o'clock—the way we're sliding along now—we'll have rubbed even that blotch of smoke off the skyline, Sam."

"And they say she averages her fourteen knots one year's end to the other? Well, that's tearin' 'em off some."

He took a fresh grip of the weather-rigging and gazed with yet more respectful interest at her deck. "Lord! Lord! loose as cinders and fair leapin' for home. And—hullo, what! Thacher's already? Lord! skipper, but she's cert'nly been pushin' the suds out of her way. I'll bet you were glad to see 'em." He nodded to the twin shafts ahead.

"I could kiss the whitewashed stones of 'em, Sammie. And here"—Clancy slipped the life-line from about his body—"here, Sam, and mind you keep her going."

They kept her going with never a slack till she was safe to the dock; and up to the dock, ere yet her lines were fast or her lowering sails down, Clancy flew.

A dozen would have stopped him. By their smiles he knew that he had brought home the first load of frozen herring of the season; but small glory in that for him now. All along the coast when around his lashed body the green seas curled 'twas not of herring, or bonus, or anything with the mark of money on it that was holding thrall his fancy. The *Duncan* herself could hardly have taken longer leaps before the gale than did Clancy up the dock.

An empty buggy, with a sleepy-looking horse between the shafts, was standing before the door of an office at the head of the wharf. A boy was huddled on some steps near by.

"Whose gear?" asked Clancy, who by then was on the seat and reaching for a whip.

"Belongs to a runner selling fish-hooks inside."

"Well, tell him I took it when he comes out. Chk-chk—get up, you fat loafer!"

"Oh, Captain—oh, Captain!" the owner called from the doorway of an office, but he called too late. Up the street a plump, astonished horse was flying with a rattling buggy, and a cloud of dust in his

wake. Through the streets of Gloucester went Clancy; gybed a corner, then went for fair sailing on a straight stretch; another corner, a beat up an incline, one more corner and another fine straight stretch, and then fetched up all standing, with the sides of the poor beast shaking like a mainsail in the wind.

Fifty yards away was Clancy's home. But he did not go clattering to that; the courage of him was now failing. He slacked down, halted even, and, leaning a hand against a tree before the door, drew a full breath or two. So much could happen in a week! At the door he tried to fit the key to the lock, but it would not turn. The cold sweat came over him. What did it mean? He tried again. Still no turn. He tried the knob then—and the door opened. It hadn't been locked at all. And then he remembered: "There'll be no lock on the door, Tommie, once I hear you are on the way home. Night or day you won't have to stop to open the lock."

Perhaps all was well after all. He stepped into the hall. Hearing a noise in the kitchen, he headed that way. Maybe—but no; it was the old helper. Before he could reach her he heard her, talking to herself, as was her habit.

"Tea and toast," she was saying. "Mustn't cut the slices too thick for toast—tea and toast for the poor creature!"

"And who's the poor creature? How is she?"

The old woman started and turned at the sound of that hoarse voice.

"Oh, Captain Clancy!"

"And how is she?"

"Oh, but the lovely baby boy—the day after we sent the telegram."

Clancy gripped the door-frame and came nigher to the old woman.

"But Ann?"

"Man alive, have no fear! Would I be standing with a quiet mind here and the poor girl not well? She's sitting up to-day."

He started to say something, but his tongue would not act.

"Upstairs—in her room?" he managed to whisper at length.

The old woman smiled and nodded.

"I must go up—but wait. I mustn't make any noise, must I? Don't tell her—don't call. I want myself to bring the first word. She'll like it better."

"Yes, and more than the word, she'll like the man that brings it. And go soon, Captain, for there's that in your eyes would win queens from their thrones."

Clancy removed his boots, the same great boots that till now had not been drawn from his feet since he had left Newfoundland. Upstairs he crept. A sound, well-built house it was, and the stairs did not creak under his weight. As he went up he heard her voice crooning softly. Changed it was, with new tones in it, but still her own voice always—no other voice like it. She was singing now; and on the landing, with the half-open door of her room no more than an arm's length away, he stopped and listened. And, listening, waited, wondering curiously just why he waited. Night and day he had been driving—snow, ice, hail, gales of wind, and great seas—and during it all but one thought, to be where he was now. A hundred times he had pictured himself bounding up the stairs and into her arms. Yet now that he was here, he was waiting; now that he was so near, he lacked the courage to go in. And even while he hesitated the dear voice broke into a new song:

"Home to his sweetheart your father is sweeping,
Home through the gale his brave vessel is leaping,
Home through the foam of the turbulent ocean,
Over the shoals, over the knolls, over the wild western ocean to thee."

He waited no longer, and as through the door he had heard, so now in the doorway she saw him. And her face! He clasped her; mother and baby, he clasped them both, and pride as well as love rang in his voice.

"Ann, Ann, but where's the man that wouldn't carry sail for you!"

"Tommie—Tommie—home again!" and laid the baby in his arms and cried on his breast.

Harry Glover got home that night. His crew lost no time in getting ashore. It had been a notable passage, and they were wistful to ease the strain and to boast of some pretty fair work against a hard westerly along the way. And did boast, until they heard that Clancy was in before them.

"Well, I'm damned!" it was with them then—with all of them, that is, but Steve Clifford.

Clifford met Sam Leary along the way.

"I half expected it, Sam, as the rest of the crew'll tell you. We were passing the fleet anchored on La Have. They hailed out something we couldn't quite get. But the skipper thought it was something in praise of the sail he was carrying. He had her under four lowers

then and was some proud. He called to me, knowing I'd been with Clancy a few trips. 'Where's your *Johnnie Duncan*?' he says—'where's Tommie Clancy and your *Johnnie Duncan* at this writing, do you s'pose?"

"'Where?' says I. 'Well, if I know Tommie Clancy and the *Johnnie Duncan*, she's playin' leap-frog across the Bay o' Fundy by this time'—ho! ho! so help me, Sam—playing leap-frog across the Bay of Fundy—yes. And he'd liked to kill me then—yes."

Later still Clancy met Glover—Glover the Diplomat, but with curious streaks of good nature in him. Clancy, with a package under one arm, was running like a little boy whose mother has sent him on an errand and told him to make haste. He had been to the drug-store, he explained, for a bottle of peptonised something or other.

"Tommie," said Glover, "what d' y' say to a little touch?"

"No time, Harry, now."

"Oh, make time. You ought to after that passage. No? Not even one for the baby?"

"Who told you about him?"

"Oh, forty people. And I hear he's a wonder, too."

"Well, I don't know but what I will have a little touch—just one. And, Harry, as God is my judge"—Clancy in a rapture held his free arm aloft—"he grips my moustache only just now, and d' y' think I could make him let go? Not him. Man! but what a grip he'll have for a wheel if ever he lives to grow up and has to go fishing."

"Let's hope he'll never have to go fishing."

"There you said it, Harry." Clancy laid the free arm on Glover's.

"No, let's hope he won't. It'll do for us, but not for our children. But if he does, and if ever he takes his mains'l in to any—"

"If he does he'll be no boy of yours, Tommie. And so he'll never take it in to any that's afloat. And now, Tommie, before we drink the boy's health—that bet I made with you just before we left on the passage—"

"That, Harry? And we drinking to the boy? Why, it's the next thing to a christening! No, put your money back."

"But what'll I do with it?"

"Lord! I don't care what you do with it. Heave it overboard, or buy bait with it, or give it to the foreign missions. I know I don't want it, nor won't take it. Here's to the boy—and the mother—God bless her!—that bore him."

ALEXANDER HARVEY
B. 1868

THE RAFT

"DON'T kill one of the others," he said. "Kill me. I am not so starved as they."

"Griggs," I replied, "has begged me to kill him first."

The emaciated passenger turned as I said the words and shot a look at Griggs. The twelve days we had spent on that raft in the trackless ocean had set the seal of starvation upon each of us, although the young woman bore it best, but Griggs had suffered unspeakably.

He was prostrate against the solitary water barrel which a rain had filled the night before. But for that Griggs must have died, surely. The girl was holding the wet end of a rag to his lips.

"I suppose," I said, slowly, and with pain, for the long-drawn-out agony of thirst and starvation seemed to have affected my throat most of all, "I suppose there's no use hoping for land or a sail."

Before the starving man could reply, the girl had made her way to where we crouched. The sea was running high, but she did not crawl when she moved about, as did the rest of us.

"I know what you men have been talking about these two days," she said.

There she paused. So weak was this young creature from lack of food and drink that her voice was the merest whisper. I wanted to support her with an arm, but my weakness had grown upon me since the last biscuit was eaten, and I could do no more than get up on my hands and knees. I felt dizzy.

"Can we not," she said, "wait another day before any one is killed and eaten?"

"You've made us wait two days as it is," I managed to answer. "Another twenty-four hours of this and there won't be any of us alive to eat at all. That's why I want to be killed and eaten here and now."

I sank back to the board that had been my bed for so many hungry hours. I had not spoken so much for a week. The effort tried me like felling timber.

The girl put her skinny elbow beneath my head and placed her lips against my ear.

" I've saved a mouthful of bread for you," she whispered.

The next moment there was a running stream down the inside of my cheeks, like a flood. The feeling had been brought on by the bit of food the girl had put stealthily on the end of my tongue. I nearly gasped as I moved that bite of crust into the side of my jaw where my teeth came down upon it like sledge-hammers. I chewed furtively two or three times, for I was afraid to let them see me do it. Not that they would have fallen upon me. They were all too weak. But I knew that the sight of me eating a lump of bread would prove to my companions on that raft as tormenting as fire and faggot.

The girl had left my side and was now standing beside the Dutch cook. I could not see his face, but the sight of her lips close to the big, hairy ear gave me an idea.

" Jinks ! " I whispered as loudly as I could.

The emaciated passenger who had begged me to kill him turned his gaunt eyes upon me when he heard his name.

" That girl gave you a mouthful of bread yesterday when she whispered in your ear."

He bent his head.

" She's just given me a mouthful of bread. I believe she's giving the cook a mouthful now."

We both looked over towards the sea chest against which the cook's head was propped. The girl had crossed the raft to where the improvised mast bore its fluttering signal of distress, but the cook was furtively chewing a mouthful.

I crawled upon my hands and knees to where the girl was.

" I'll kill the next man you feed," I said. " Eat your bread yourself."

" You got the last mouthful," she said.

Never a suspicion that she might be lying crossed my mind. I paid no more attention to the girl. My mind was obsessed by another notion. I thought I would swoon as I retraced my path to where Jinks was lying.

" Say ! " I said hoarsely, " you say you're willing to die to make a meal for the rest of us ? "

" My God, yes ! "

" How are we going to kill you ? "

Jinks stared wildly about. There were two blunt knives aboard and an axe. I took no stock in the axe. Not one of us had the strength left to lift it. The knives were too blunt to be of use in opening a vein, for the simple reason that every man on the raft had been brought so low by hunger and weakness that he could not have pressed it even against his own skinny wrist.

"I'll tie a handkerchief about my throat and strangle," said Jinks.

He had the knot tied in a jiffy, but he was too weak to pull with enough energy for strangulation. He gave up in five minutes and lay still.

But the procedure of Jinks had given me a suggestion. I crawled over to the one bit of rope still with us. It bound the timbers of the raft we had hastily constructed when the ship went down. But try as I might, it was too strongly knotted to be unloosed by any effort of a starving man.

Here was a crisis, indeed. Our one hope of life was the slaughter of a man, but here were we too weak from loss of food and drink to be capable of murder.

"Mr. Blake!"

Starved though I was, I almost started up. The girl's lips were once more at my ear.

"I must tell you something," she gasped.

Her long hair fell in a cascade about my face. She turned to look at the others behind me, as if she were fearful of some secret of which she might be sole guardian. In another moment I knew what the secret was, because she bent her head over mine and kissed my lips.

How cool her mouth was! It was like a long, cold drink.

"Now you know," she whispered. "I love you. Wait one more day for me."

In another minute she was making her way back to the cook's side. I saw her dip her rag into the flowing sea and swab his horrible feet as he lay against the sea chest. But I thought no more of death.

Slowly and heavily the burning sun dropped into the waters far beyond the sky. Out peered the stars. The starving men all about me lay like logs of the raft that bore them on, on. I could barely discern the shadows we made as midnight drew forward and brought the moon up the sky.

" Blake ! "

I turned my head slowly at this whisper of my name. It was Griggs.

" Let us hang on another day," he whispered. Then he swooned.

" Yes," I whispered, in an hour, when he recovered consciousness. " Let us hang on."

I no longer remembered, as I said the words, that our last bite of food had gone down our throats the day before ; that our last few pints of water were in the barrel beneath the mast. I would live for love. Griggs crawled back to where the cook lay.

" My darling ! "

I barely caught the whisper, but I had seen her coming and the sight revived me. I tried to put an arm about her waist, but only a hand reached hers.

" Dearest," she whispered, " don't let them see us."

She had kissed my lips and gone before I could utter a word. It was as well, for in a moment more I was looking into the glaring eyes of Jinks.

" We'll wait another day," he said ; " another day before I die to feed you all."

His face was withdrawn, but I had not the strength to gaze after his retreating figure. Nor did I think of death any more. My mind ran on that devoted girl. How pretty she seemed among the starving thirty of us ! Would she come back and kiss me once again ? I managed to lift my head from the bottom of the raft and turned it for a sight of her. The blackness of a Pacific night was upon the deep, yet I could see the outline of the sea chest, behind which she retreated for sleep when the shadows fell. The cook's bulk obscured its outline to my glance, for he was sprawled in front of it. The dawn could not be far away, unless the stars were lying, but the sea was rising and falling heavily like a sleeper in pain. A vague alarm for her seized me on a sudden, and I essayed to walk to where she was.

I could not get upon my feet. Upon my hands and knees I moved like a shadow. Had I the wealth of Ormuzd and of Ind I would have given all of it to be able to speak her name aloud. But what was her name ? It dawned upon me for the first time since we kissed that I knew not her name nor anything about her. She was one of the passengers in the wrecked ship. So was I. Then she could not possibly know my full name, unless some purser or steward had

revealed it. Well, I would question her regarding these things when I had reached her side.

Would I ever do so? Minute after minute I spent crawling to the chest. The starving men lay in slumber or in swoon, quite motionless. I wondered if the cook, too, could be asleep.

My head swam from the exertion of so much of my strength as was left after these long days without food or drink. I collapsed and lay motionless, until repose should have brought back some capacity to use my knees and hands.

I heard whispers. Her voice! Slowly I wrenched my neck about until my eyes were on a level with the top of the sea chest. There I clung, fearing the swoon.

"Darling!"

"Wait one day for the woman who loves you."

Then I heard the sound of a kiss.

Slowly and silently I dragged myself to the top of the sea chest. A strange fury had brought me strength. I peered down upon the girl.

She had one arm about the cook's neck. Her long hair swept his face. I could see by the light of the moon that his horrible paw rested upon her shoulder. I would have given this world for strength enough to clutch her by the throat.

"Wait one more day for me, beloved!" I heard her whisper. Then she stole around to the other side of the chest.

I was waiting for her. Resisting an impulse to drag her with me into that running sea—an impulse for which rage and hate would have given me strength—I hissed:

"Wanton! I saw you kiss that Dutch fiend. I heard every word you spoke to him!"

The little blood left in me rushed to my brain and I fell beside the chest. She crawled to where I lay and put an arm about me.

I bit her.

"Leave me!" I managed to groan faintly. "Leave me!"

I could just make out the dawn at the other extremity of the horizon. I resolved that this day would bring my death.

"I had to do it," I heard her whisper, as she placed her lips to my ear. "That Dutchman would have killed one of you a week ago for food, but I made love to him to save our lives. I took his knife away while he had still strength left to use it and I threw it into the sea."

" You lie ! " I managed to hiss out. " Griggs wanted to die that we might eat him."

" Yes, and I won him over to life with my kisses."

" Vile woman ! "

I wanted to roar the words, but my voice scarcely attained the volume of a whisper. She had placed my head in her lap and I lay looking up helplessly into her face. Fury filled me and I tried to call for help.

" Jinks ! " I moaned. " Jinks ! "

" Jinks will do nothing for you," she whispered. " I have bought him too with my kisses. I have bribed every man on this raft to wait by telling him he alone has my love."

She relaxed her hold of my neck and leaned against the chest like a woman in a faint. I watched her closed eyes with the helpless fury of a starving man.

" Had I the strength," I muttered, " I would throw you into these waters. You have been the ruin of us all."

" I have saved you," she whispered. " Look ! "

I followed her pointing finger with my eye, and upon the waters, lit up now by the dawn, I saw a sail.

STEPHEN CRANE
1870–1900

THE VETERAN

OUT of the low window could be seen three hickory trees placed irregularly in a meadow that was resplendent in spring-time green. Farther away, the old, dismal belfry of the village church loomed over the pines. A horse, meditating in the shade of one of the hickories, lazily swished his tail. The warm sunshine made an oblong of vivid yellow on the floor of the grocery.

"Could you see the whites of their eyes?" said the man, who was seated on a soap box.

"Nothing of the kind," replied old Henry warmly. "Just a lot of flitting figures, and I let go at where they 'peared to be the thickest. Bang!"

"Mr. Fleming," said the grocer—his deferential voice expressed somehow the old man's exact social weight—"Mr. Fleming, you never was frightened much in them battles, was you?"

The veteran looked down and grinned. Observing his manner, the entire group tittered. "Well, I guess I was," he answered finally. "Pretty well scared, sometimes. Why, in my first battle I thought the sky was falling down. I thought the world was coming to an end. You bet I was scared."

Every one laughed. Perhaps it seemed strange and rather wonderful to them that a man should admit the thing, and in the tone of their laughter there was probably more admiration than if old Fleming had declared that he had always been a lion. Moreover, they knew that he had ranked as an orderly sergeant, and so their opinion of his heroism was fixed. None, to be sure, knew how an orderly sergeant ranked, but then it was understood to be somewhere just shy of a major-general's stars. So, when old Henry admitted that he had been frightened, there was a laugh.

"The trouble was," said the old man, "I thought they were all shooting at me. Yes, sir, I thought every man in the other army was aiming at me in particular, and only me. And it seemed so

darned unreasonable, you know. I wanted to explain to 'em what an almighty good fellow I was, because I thought then they might quit all trying to hit me. But I couldn't explain, and they kept on being unreasonable—blim !—blam ! bang ! So I run ! "

Two little triangles of wrinkles appeared at the corners of his eyes. Evidently he appreciated some comedy in this recital. Down near his feet, however, little Jim, his grandson, was visibly horror-stricken. His hands were clasped nervously, and his eyes were wide with astonishment at this terrible scandal, his most magnificent grandfather telling such a thing.

" That was at Chancellorsville. Of course, afterward I got kind of used to it. A man does. Lots of men, though, seem to feel all right from the start. I did, as soon as I ' got on to it,' as they say now ; but at first I was pretty well flustered. Now, there was young Jim Conklin, old Si Conklin's son—that used to keep the tannery—you none of you recollect him—well, he went into it from the start just as if he was born to it. But with me it was different. I had to get used to it."

When little Jim walked with his grandfather he was in the habit of skipping along on the stone pavement, in front of the three stores and the hotel of the town, and betting that he could avoid the cracks. But upon this day he walked soberly, with his hand gripping two of his grandfather's fingers. Sometimes he kicked abstractedly at dandelions that curved over the walk. Any one could see that he was much troubled.

" There's Sickles's colt over in the medder, Jimmie," said the old man. " Don't you wish you owned one like him ? "

" Um," said the boy, with a strange lack of interest. He continued his reflections. Then finally he ventured : " Grandpa—now—was that true what you was telling those men ? "

" What ? " asked the grandfather. " What was I telling them ? "

" Oh, about your running."

" Why, yes, that was true enough, Jimmie. It was my first fight, and there was an awful lot of noise, you know."

Jimmie seemed dazed that this idol, of its own will, should so totter. His stout boyish idealism was injured.

Presently the grandfather said : " Sickles's colt is going for a drink. Don't you wish you owned Sickles's colt, Jimmie ? "

The boy merely answered: "He ain't as nice as our'n." He lapsed then into another moody silence.

. . . . . .

One of the hired men, a Swede, desired to drive to the county seat for purposes of his own. The old man loaned a horse and an unwashed buggy. It appeared later that one of the purposes of the Swede was to get drunk.

After quelling some boisterous frolic of the farm hands and boys in the garret, the old man had that night gone peacefully to sleep, when he was aroused by clamouring at the kitchen door. He grabbed his trousers, and they waved out behind as he dashed forward. He could hear the voice of the Swede, screaming and blubbering. He pushed the wooden button, and, as the door flew open, the Swede, a maniac, stumbled inward, chattering, weeping, still screaming: "De barn fire! Fire! Fire! De barn fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!"

There was a swift and indescribable change in the old man. His face ceased instantly to be a face; it became a mask, a grey thing, with horror written about the mouth and eyes. He hoarsely shouted at the foot of the little rickety stairs, and immediately, it seemed, there came down an avalanche of men. No one knew that during this time the old lady had been standing in her night-clothes at the bedroom door, yelling: "What's th' matter? What's th' matter? What's th' matter?"

When they dashed toward the barn it presented to their eyes its usual appearance, solemn, rather mystic in the black night. The Swede's lantern was overturned at a point some yards in front of the barn doors. It contained a wild little conflagration of its own, and even in their excitement some of those who ran felt a gentle secondary vibration of the thrifty part of their minds at sight of this overturned lantern. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a calamity.

But the cattle in the barn were trampling, trampling, trampling, and above this noise could be heard a humming like the song of innumerable bees. The old man hurled aside the great doors, and a yellow flame leaped out at one corner and sped and wavered frantically up the old grey wall. It was glad, terrible, this single flame, like the wild banner of deadly and triumphant foes.

The motley crowd from the garret had come with all the pails

of the farm. They flung themselves upon the well. It was a leisurely old machine, long dwelling in indolence. It was in the habit of giving out water with a sort of reluctance. The men stormed at it, cursed it; but it continued to allow the buckets to be filled only after the wheezy windlass had howled many protests at the mad-handed men.

With his opened knife in his hand old Fleming himself had gone headlong into the barn, where the stifling smoke swirled with the air currents, and where could be heard in its fulness the terrible chorus of the flames, laden with tones of hate and death, a hymn of wonderful ferocity.

He flung a blanket over an old mare's head, cut the halter close to the manger, led the mare to the door, and fairly kicked her out to safety. He returned with the same blanket, and rescued one of the work horses. He took five horses out, and then came out himself, with his clothes bravely on fire. He had no whiskers, and very little hair on his head. They soused five pailfuls of water on him. His eldest son made a clean miss with the sixth pailful, because the old man had turned and was running down the decline and around to the basement of the barn, where were the stanchions of the cows. Some one noticed at the time that he ran very lamely, as if one of the frenzied horses had smashed his hip.

The cows, with their heads held in the heavy stanchions, had thrown themselves, strangled themselves, tangled themselves—done everything which the ingenuity of their exuberant fear could suggest to them.

Here, as at the well, the same thing happened to every man save one. Their hands went mad. They became incapable of everything save the power to rush into dangerous situations.

The old man released the cow nearest the door, and she, blind drunk with terror, crashed into the Swede. The Swede had been running to and fro babbling. He carried an empty milk-pail, to which he clung with an unconscious, fierce enthusiasm. He shrieked like one lost as he went under the cow's hoofs, and the milk-pail, rolling across the floor, made a flash of silver in the gloom.

Old Fleming took a fork, beat off the cow, and dragged the paralysed Swede to the open air. When they had rescued all the cows save one, which had so fastened herself that she could not be moved an inch, they returned to the front of the barn, and stood

sadly, breathing like men who had reached the final point of human effort.

Many people had come running. Some one had even gone to the church, and now, from the distance, rang the tocsin note of the old bell. There was a long flare of crimson on the sky, which made remote people speculate as to the whereabouts of the fire.

The long flames sang their drumming chorus in voices of the heaviest bass. The wind whirled clouds of smoke and cinders into the faces of the spectators. The form of the old barn was outlined in black amid these masses of orange-hued flames.

And then came this Swede again, crying as one who is the weapon of the sinister fates: "De colts! De colts! You have forgot de colts!"

Old Fleming staggered. It was true: they had forgotten the two colts in the box-stalls at the back of the barn. "Boys," he said, "I must try to get 'em out." They clamoured about him then, afraid for him, afraid of what they should see. Then they talked wildly each to each. "Why, it's sure death!" "He would never get out!" "Why, it's suicide for a man to go in there!" Old Fleming stared absent-mindedly at the open doors. "The poor little things!" he said. He rushed into the barn.

When the roof fell in, a great funnel of smoke swarmed toward the sky, as if the old man's mighty spirit, released from its body—a little bottle—had swelled like the genie of fable. The smoke was tinted rose-hue from the flames, and perhaps the unutterable midnights of the universe will have no power to daunt the colour of this soul.

FREDERICK STUART GREENE
B. 1870

THE CAT OF THE CANE-BRAKE

"SALLY! O-oh, Sally! I'm a-goin' now." Jim Gantt pushed back the limp brim of his rusty felt hat and turned colourless eyes toward the cabin.

A young woman came from around the corner of the house. From each hand dangled a bunch of squawking chickens. She did not speak until she had reached the wagon.

"Now, Jim, you ain't a-goin' to let them fellers down in Andalushy git you inter no blind tiger, air you?" The question came in a hopeless drawl; hopeless, too, her look into the man's sallow face.

"I ain't tetched a drop in more'n three months, has I?" Jim's answer was in a sullen key.

"No, Jim, you bin doin' right well lately." She tossed the chickens into the wagon, thoughtless of the hurt to their tied and twisted legs. "They're worth two bits apiece. That comes to two dollars, Jim. Don't you take a nickel less'n that."

Jim gave a listless pull at the cotton rope that served as reins.

"Git up thar, mule!" he called, and the wagon creaked off on wobbling wheels down the hot, dusty road.

The woman looked scornfully at the man's humped-over back for a full minute, turned and walked to the house, a hard smile at her mouth.

Sally Gantt gave no heed to her drab surroundings as she crossed the short stretch from road to cabin. All her twenty-two years had been spent in this far end of Alabama, where one dreary, unkempt clearing in the pine-woods is as dismal as the next. Comparisons which might add their fuel to her smouldering discontent were spared her. Yet, unconsciously, this bare, grassless country, with its flat miles of monotonous pine forests, its flatter miles of rank cane-brake, served to distil a bitter gall, poisoning all her thoughts.

The double cabin of Jim Gantt, its two rooms separated by a "dog-trot"—an open porch cut through the centre of the structure

—was counted a thing of luxury by his scattered neighbours. Gantt had built it four years before, when he took up the land as his homestead, and Sally for his wife. The labour of building this cabin had apparently drained his stock of energy to the dregs. Beyond the necessary toil of planting a small patch of corn, a smaller one of sweet potatoes, and fishing in the sluggish waters of Pigeon Creek, he now did nothing. Sally tended the chickens, their one source of money, and gave intermittent attention to the half-dozen razor-back hogs, which, with the scrubby mule, comprised their toll of live-stock.

As the woman mounted the hewn log that answered as a step to the dog-trot, she stopped to listen. From the kitchen came a faint noise; a sound of crunching. Sally went on silent feet to the door. On the table, littered with unwashed dishes, a cat was gnawing at a fish head—a gaunt beast, its lean flanks covered with wiry fur except where ragged scars left exposed the bare hide. Its strong jaws crushed through the thick skull-bone of the fish as if it were an empty bird's egg.

Sally sprang to the stove and seized a pine knot.

"Dog-gone your yaller hide!" she screamed. "Git out of hyar!"

The cat wheeled with a start and faced the woman, its evil eyes glittering.

"Git, you yaller devil!" the woman screamed again.

The cat sprang sidewise to the floor. Sally sent the jagged piece of wood spinning through the air. It crashed against the far wall, missing the beast by an inch. The animal arched its huge body and held its ground.

"You varmint, I'll git you this time!" Sally stooped for another piece of wood. The cat darted through the door ahead of the flying missile.

"I'll kill you yit!" Sally shouted after it. "An' he kain't hinder me neither!"

She sat down heavily and wiped the sweat from her forehead.

It was several minutes before the woman rose from the chair and crossed the dog-trot to the sleeping-room. Throwing her faded sun-bonnet into a corner, she loosened her hair and began to brush it.

Sally Gantt was neither pretty nor handsome. But in a country peopled solely by pine-woods crackers, her black hair and eyes, clear skin and white teeth, made her stand out. She was a woman, and young. To a man, also young, who for two years had seen no face unpainted with the sallow hue of chills and fever, no eyes except

faded blue ones framed by white, straggling lashes, no sound teeth, and the unsound ones stained always by the snuff stick, she might easily appear alluring.

With feminine deftness Sally re-coiled her hair. She took from a wooden peg a blue calico dress, its printed pattern as yet unbleached by the fierce suns. It gave to her slender figure some touch of grace. From beneath the bed she drew a pair of heavy brogans; a shoe fashioned, doubtless, to match the listless nature of the people who most use them, slipping on or off without hindrance from lace or buckle. As a final touch, she fastened about her head a piece of blue ribbon, the band of cheap silk making the flash in her black eyes the brighter.

Sally left the house and started across the rubbish-littered yard. A short distance from the cabin she stopped to look about her.

"I'm dog-tired of it all," she said fiercely. "I hates the house. I hates the whole place, an' more'n all I hates Jim."

She turned, scowling, and walked between the rows of growing corn that reached to the edge of the clearing. Here began the pine-woods, the one saving touch nature has given to this land. Beneath the grateful shade she hastened her steps. The trees stood in endless disordered ranks, rising straight and bare of branch until high aloft their spreading tops caught the sunlight.

A quarter of a mile brought her to the lowland. She went down the slight decline and stepped within the cane-brake. Here gloom closed about her. The thickly growing cane reached to twice her height. Above the cane the cypress spread its branches, draped with the sad grey moss of the South. No sun's ray struggled through the rank foliage to lighten the sodden earth beneath. Sally picked her way slowly through the swamp, peering cautiously beyond each fallen log before venturing a further step. Crawfish scuttled backward from her path to slip down the mud chimneys of their homes. The black earth and decaying plants filled the hot, still air with noisome odours. Thousands of hidden insects sounded through the dank stretches their grating calls. Slimy water oozed from beneath the heavy soles of her brogans, green and purple bubbles were left in each footprint, bubbles with iridescent oily skins.

As she went around a sharp turn she was caught up and lifted clear from the ground in the arms of a young man—a boy of twenty or thereabout.

" Oh, Bob, you scairt me—you certainly air rough ! "

Without words he kissed her again and again.

" Now, Bob, you quit ! Ain't you had enough ? "

" Could I ever have enough ? Oh, Sally, I love you so ! " The words trembled from the boy.

" You certainly ain't like none of 'em 'round hyar, Bob." There was some pride in Sally's drawling voice. " I never seed none of the men folks act with gals like you does."

" There's no other girl like you to make them." Then, holding her from him, he went on fiercely : " You don't let any of them try it, do you ? "

Sally smiled up into his glowing eyes.

" You knows I don't. They'd be afeard of Jim."

The blood rushed to the boy's cheeks, his arms dropped to his side ; he stood sobered.

" Sally, we can't go on this way any longer. That's why I asked you to come to the river to-day."

" What's a-goin' to stop us ? " A frightened look crossed the woman's face.

" I'm going away."

She made a quick step toward him.

" You ain't lost your job on the new railroad ? "

" No. Come down to the boat where we can talk this over."

He helped her down the bank of the creek to a flat-bottomed skiff, and seated her in the stern with a touch of courtesy before taking the cross seat facing her.

" No, I haven't lost my job," he began earnestly, " but my section of the road is about finished. They'll move me to another residency farther up the line in about a week."

She sat silent a moment, her black eyes wide with question. He searched them for some sign of sorrow.

" What kin I do after you air gone ? "

There was a hopeless note in her voice ; it pleased the boy.

" That's the point : instead of letting them move me, I'm going to move myself." He paused that she might get the full meaning of his coming words.

" I'm going away from here to-night, and I'm going to take you with me."

" No, no ! I dasn't ! " She shrank before his steady gaze.

He moved swiftly across to her. Throwing his arms around her, he poured out his words.

" Yes ! You will ! You must ! You love me, don't you ? "

Sally nodded in helpless assent.

" Better than anything in this world ? "

Again Sally nodded.

" Then listen. To-night at twelve you come to the river. I'll be waiting for you at the edge of the swamp. We'll row down to Brewton. We can easily catch the six-twenty to Mobile, and, once there, we'll begin to live," he finished grandly.

" But I can't ! Air you crazy ? How kin I git away an' Jim right in the house ? "

" I've thought of all that ; you just let him see this." He drew a bottle from beneath the seat. " You know what he'll do to this ; it's the strongest corn whisky I could find."

" Oh, Bob ! I'm a-scairt to."

" Don't you love me ? " His young eyes looked reproach.

Sally threw both arms about the boy's neck and drew his head down to her lips. Then she pushed him from her.

" Bob, is it so what the men-folks all say, that the railroad gives you a hundred dollars every month ? "

He laughed. " Yes, you dear girl, and more. I get a hundred and a quarter, and I've been getting it for two years in this God-forsaken country, and nothing to spend it on. I've got over a thousand dollars saved up."

The woman's eyes widened. She kissed the boy on the mouth.

" They 'lows as how you're the smartest engineer on the road."

The boy's head was held high.

Sally made some mental calculations before she spoke again.

" Oh, Bob, I jes' can't. I'm a-scairt to."

He caught her to him. A man of longer experience might have noted the sham in her reluctance.

" My darling, what are you afraid of ? " he cried.

" What air we a-goin' to do after we gits to Mobile ? "

" Oh, I've thought of everything. They're building a new line down in Texas. We'll go there. I'll get another job as resident engineer. I have my profession," he ended proudly.

" You might git tired, and want to git shed of me, Bob."

He smothered her words under fierce kisses. His young heart beat

at bursting pressure. In bright colours he pictured the glory of Mobile, New Orleans, and all the world that lay before them to love each other in.

When Sally left the boat she had promised to come. Where the pine-trees meet the cane-brake he would be waiting for her, at midnight.

At the top of the bank she turned to wave.

"Wait! Wait!" called the boy. He rushed up the slope.

"Quit, Bob, you're hurtin' me." She tore herself from his arms and hastened back along the slimy path. When she reached the pine-wood she paused.

"More 'n a thousand dollars!" she murmured, and a slow, satisfied smile crossed her shrewd face.

The sun, now directly over the tops of the trees, shot its scorching rays through the foliage. They struck the earth in vertical shafts, heating it to the burning point. Not a breath stirred the glistening pine-needles on the towering branches. It was one of those noontimes which, in the moisture-charged air of southern Alabama, makes life a steaming hell to all living things save reptiles and lovers.

Reaching the cabin, Sally went first to the kitchen room. She opened a cupboard and, taking the cork from the bottle, placed the whisky on the top shelf and closed the wooden door.

She crossed the dog-trot to the sleeping-room; a spitting snarl greeted her entrance. In the centre of the bed crouched the yellow cat, its eyes gleaming, every muscle over its bony frame drawn taut, ready for the spring. The woman, startled, drew back. The cat moved on stiff legs nearer. Unflinchingly they glared into each other's eyes.

"Git out of hyar afore I kill yer! You yaller devil!" Sally's voice rang hard as steel.

The cat stood poised at the edge of the bed, its glistening teeth showing in its wide mouth. Without an instant's shift of her defiant stare, Sally wrenched a shoe from her foot. The animal with spread claws sprang straight for the woman's throat. The cat and the heavy brogan crashed together in mid-air. Together they fell to the floor; the cat landed lightly, silently, and bounded through the open door.

Sally fell back against the log wall of the cabin, feeling the skin at her throat with trembling fingers. . . .

"Jim! Oh-h, Jim!" Sally called from the cabin. "Come on in, yer supper's ready."

" He ain't took nothin' to drink to-day," she thought. " It's nigh three months now, he'll be 'most crazy."

The man took a few sticks of wood from the ground, and came on dragging feet through the gloom. As Sally watched his listless approach she felt in full force the oppressive melancholy of her dismal surroundings. Awakened by the boy's enthusiastic plans, imagination stirred within her. In the distance a girdled pine stood clear-cut against the horizon. Its bark peeled and fallen left the dead, naked trunk the colour of dried bones. Near the stunted top one bare limb stretched out. Unnoticed a thousand times before, to the woman it looked to-night a ghostly gibbet against the black sky.

Sally shuddered and went into the lighted kitchen.

" I jes' kilt a rattler down by the wood-pile." Jim threw down his load and drew a splint-bottomed chair to the table.

" Ground-rattler, Jim ? "

" Naw, sir-ee ! A hell-bendin' big diamond-back."

" Did you hurt the skin ? " Sally asked quickly.

" Naw. I chopped his neck clean, short to the haid. An' I done it so durn quick his fangs is a-stickin' out yit, I reckon."

" Did he strike at you ? "

" Yes, sir-ee, an' the pizen came out of his mouth jes' like a fog."

" Ah, you're foolin' me ! "

" No, I ain't neither. I've heard tell of it, bit I never seed it afore. The ground was kinda black whar he lit, an' jes' as I brought the axe down on him, thar I seed a little puff like, same as white steam, in front of his mouth."

" How big was he, Jim ? "

" 'Leven rattles an' a button."

" Did you skin him ? "

" Naw, it was too durn dark, but I hung him high up, so's the hawgs won't git at him. His skin 'll fotch fo' bits down at Andalushy."

" Ax 'em six, Jim, them big ones gittin' kinda skeerce."

Jim finished his supper in silence ; the killing of the snake had provided more conversation than was usual during three meals among pine-woods people.

As Sally was clearing away the dishes, the yellow cat came through the door. Slinking close to the wall, it avoided the woman, and sprang upon the knees of its master. Jim grinned into the eyes of the beast and began stroking its coarse hair. The cat set up a grating purr.

Sally looked at the two for a moment in silence.

" Jim, you gotta kill that cat."

Jim's grin widened, showing his tobacco-stained teeth.

" Jim, I'm a-tellin' you, you gotta kill that cat."

" An' I'm a-tellin' you I won't."

" Jim, it sprung at me to-day, an' would have hurt me somethin' turrible if I hadn't hit it over the haid with my shoe."

" Well, you must 'a' done somethin' to make him. You leave him alone an' he won't pester you."

The woman hesitated; she looked at the man as yet undecided; after a moment she spoke again.

" Jim Gantt, I'm axin' you for the las' time, which does you think more'n of, me or that snarlin' varmint ? "

" He don't snarl at me so much as you does," the man answered doggedly. " Anyway, I ain't a-goin' to kill him; an' you gotta leave him alone, too. You jes' min' yer own business an' go tote the mattress out on the trot. It's too durn hot to sleep in the house."

The woman passed behind him to the cupboard, reached up, opened wide the wooden door, and went out of the room.

Jim stroked the cat, its grating purr growing louder in the stillness.

A minute passed.

Into the dull eyes of the man a glitter came, and grew. Slowly he lifted his head. Farther and farther his chin drew up until the cords beneath the red skin of his neck stood out in ridges. The nostrils of his bony nose quivered, he sniffed the hot air like a dog straining to catch a distant scent. His tongue protruded and moved from side to side across his lips.

Standing in the darkness without, the woman smiled grimly.

Abruptly the man rose. The forgotten cat fell, twisted in the air, and lighted on its feet. Jim wheeled and strode to the cupboard. As his hand closed about the bottle, the gleam in his eyes became burning flames. He jerked the bottle from the shelf, threw his head far back. The fiery liquor ran down his throat. He returned to his seat; the cat rubbed its ribbed flank against his leg, he stooped and lifted it to the table. Waving the bottle in front of the yellow beast, he laughed:

" Here's to yer—an' to'ad yer ! " and swallowed half a tumblerful of the colourless liquid.

Sally dragged the shuck mattress to the dog-trot. Fully dressed, she lay waiting for midnight.

An hour went by before Jim shivered the empty bottle against the log wall of the kitchen. Pressing both hands hard upon the table, he heaved himself to his feet, upsetting the candle in the effort. He leered at the flame and slapped his bare palm down on it. The hot, melted wax oozed up, unheeded, between his fingers. Clinging to the table top, he turned himself toward the open door, steadied his swaying body for an instant, then lurched forward. His shoulder crashed against the door-post, his body spun half-way round. The man fell flat upon his back, missing the mattress by a yard. The back of his head struck hard on the rough boards of the porch floor. He lay motionless, his feet sticking straight up on the door-sill.

The yellow cat sprang lightly over the fallen body and went out into the night. . . .

Wide-eyed, the woman lay, watching. After moments of tense listening the sound of faint breathing came to her from the prone figure. Sally frowned. " He's too no 'count to git kilt," she said aloud, and turned on her side. She judged, from the stars, it was not yet eleven. Drowsiness came ; she fell into uneasy slumber.

Out in the night the yellow cat was prowling. It stopped near the wood-pile. With extended paw, it touched lightly something that lay on the ground. Its long teeth fastened upon it. The cat slunk off toward the house. Without sound it sprang to the floor of the dog-trot. Stealthily, its body crouched low, it started to cross through the open way. As it passed the woman she muttered and struck out in her sleep. The cat flattened to the floor. Near the moving arm, the thing it carried fell from its teeth. The beast scurried out across the opening.

The night marched on to the sound of a million voices calling shrilly through the gloom.

The woman awoke. The stars glowed pale from a cloudy midnight sky. She reached out her right hand, palm down, to raise herself from the bed, throwing her full weight upon it. Two needle points pierced her wrist. A smothered cry was wrung from her lips. She reached with her left hand to pluck at the hurt place. It touched something cold, something hard and clammy, some dead thing. She jerked back the hand. A scream shivered through the still air. Pains, becoming instantly acute, unbearable, darted through her arm. Again

she tried to pull away the torturing needle points. Her quivering hand groped aimlessly in the darkness. She could not force herself, a second time, to touch the dead, clinging thing at her wrist. Screaming, she dragged herself to the man.

" Jim, I'm hurt, help me ! Help me ! "

The man did not move.

" Jim, wake up ! Help me ! " she wailed uselessly to the inert man.

The terrifying pain spurted from wrist to shoulder. With her clenched left hand she beat against the man's upturned face.

" You drunken fool, help me ! Take this thing away ! "

The man lay torpid beneath her pounding fist. . . .

Along the path to Pigeon Creek, where the pine-woods run into the cane-brake, a boy waited ; waited until the eastern sky grew from black to grey. Then with cautious tread he began to move, his face turned toward the cabin. As he neared the clearing the grey in the east changed to red. He left the woods and entered the field of corn. His footfalls made no sound on the earth between the furrows.

At the cabin he drew close against the wall and listened. A man's heavy breathing reached his straining ears. Slowly he moved toward the opening in the middle of the house. Above the breathing he heard a grating noise ; between the deep-drawn breaths and the grating, another sound came to him ; a harsh, rhythmic scratching.

The edge of the sun rose abruptly above the flat earth, sending light within the opening.

The boy thrust his head around the angle. A yellow cat was sitting at the foot of the mattress. From its throat grating purrs came in regular measure ; between each purr the beast's spread claws clutched and released the stiff ticking.

Beyond lay the man.

Between the cat and the man, stretched across the shuck bed, was the woman ; her glassy eyes staring up into the grinning face of the cat. From her shoulder, reaching out toward the boy, was a livid, turgid thing ; a hand and arm, puffed beyond all human shape. From the swollen wrist, its poisoned fangs sunk deep into an artery, hung the mangled head of a snake.

The swaying corn blades whipped against the boy's white face as he fled between the rows.

SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS
B. 1871

SUCH AS WALK IN DARKNESS

IN all the trade of the city you might not find such another quaint business firm as Solomon John and Billy Wigg. The senior partner was a gentle old giant; the junior a brisk and shaggy little dog. It was Solomon John's business to stand on a roaring corner and sell papers; it was Billy Wigg's business to take care of him while he did it, for he was blind. It was our business—Dr. Harvey's and mine—to pay for our papers and pass on, but we seldom strictly minded it. Instead, we would stop to talk to Solomon John, to the detriment of trade, and to be patronised by Billy Wigg, who was much puffed up with self-importance, conceiving himself to be principal owner of the earth and sole proprietor of Solomon John. In the half of which he was correct.

I was very fond of Billy Wigg, despite his airs of superiority. Harvey preferred old Solomon; but this was a semi-professional interest, for my medical friend had contracted the pamphlet habit, which he indulged before scientific bodies made up of gentlemen with weak eyes who knew more about ophthalmology than can be found in many fat tomes. Solomon John was a remarkable case of something quite unpronounceable, and Harvey used to gaze into his eyes with rapt intensity, while Billy Wigg fidgeted and struggled against the temptation to gnaw such portions of him as were within reach; for Billy Wigg didn't understand, and what he didn't understand he disapproved of on principle. In the light of subsequent events I believe Billy's uneasiness to have been an instance of animal prevision.

To see Billy Wigg conduct his master across that mill-race of traffic that swirled between curb and curb, as he did every morning in time for business, was an artistic pleasure. Something more than a mere pilot was the dog; rather the rudder to whose accurate direction old Solomon responded with precise and prompt fidelity. A tug of the trouser leg from behind would bring the ancient newsboy to a halt. A gentle jerk forward would start him again, and in obedience to a steady pull to one side or the other he would trustingly suffer himself to be conducted around a checked wagon or a halted cable car. All

the time Billy Wigg would keep up a running conversation made up of admonition, warning, and encouragement.

" Come on, now "—in a series of sharp yaps as they started from the curb. " Push right ahead. Hold hard. That's all right; it's by. Hurry now. Hurry, I said. *Will* you do as I tell you? " Then, to a too pressing cabby, in an angry bark, " What's the matter with you, anyway? Trying to run folks down? Hey? Well "—apologetically, in response to a jerk on his string—" these fool drivers do stir me up. Wait a bit. Now for it. And here we are."

How many thousand times dog and man had made the trip in safety before the dire day of the accident not even Solomon John can reckon. Harvey and I had started down town early, while our pair of paper-vending friends chanced to be a little late. As we reached the corner they were already half-way across the street, and Billy Wigg, with all the strength of terror, was striving to haul Solomon John backward.

" What's the matter with Billy? " said Harvey, for from the side-walk we could not then see the cause of his excitement.

A second later the question was answered, as there plunged into view from behind a car the galloping horse of a derelict delivery wagon.

" Good heavens! Look at the old man," I cried, and in the same breath, " Look at the dog," gasped Harvey.

With one mighty jerk Billy Wigg had torn the leash from his master's hand. Bereft of his sole guidance in the thunder and rush of traffic, the blind man stretched out piteous hands, warding the death he could not see. " Billy," he quavered, " where are you, Billy? Come back to me, Billy-dog."

For once Billy Wigg was deaf to his master's voice. He was obeying a more imperious call, that unfathomed nobility of dog-nature that responds so swiftly to the summons. He was casting his own life in the balance to save another's. Straight at the horse's throat he launched himself, a forlorn hope. It was a very big horse, and Billy was a very little dog. The up-stroke of the knee caught him full; he was flung, whirling, fell almost under the wheels of a cab, rolled into the gutter, and lay there quiet. The horse had swerved a little, not quite enough. There was a scream, and the blind man went down from the glancing impact of the shoulder. Harvey and I were beside him almost as soon as the cross-walk policeman. The three of us carried him to the side-walk.

" No need to call an ambulance, officer," said Harvey. " I'm a physician and the man is a friend of mine."

" Bedad, thin, the dawg is a frind of mine," said the big fellow. " Couldn't ye take him along too, sir ? "

" Well—rather," said Harvey heartily. " Where is he ? " He turned to look for the dog.

Billy Wigg came crawling toward us. Never tell me that dogs have no souls. The eyes in Billy's shaggy little face yearned with a more than human passion of anxiety and love, as, gasping with pain—for he had been cruelly shaken—he dragged himself to his partner's face. At the touch of the warm, eager tongue, Solomon John's eyes opened. He stretched out his hand and buried it in the heavy fur.

" Hello, Billy," he said weakly. " I was afraid you were hurt. Are you all right, old boy ? " And Billy, burrowing a wet nose in Solomon John's neck, wept for joy with loud whines.

Some rapid and expert wire-pulling on the part of Harvey landed our pair of friends in a private hospital, where Solomon John proved a most grateful and gentle patient, and Billy Wigg a most tumultuous one until arrangement was made for the firm to occupy one and the same cot. Then he became tractable, even enduring the indignity of a flannel jacket and splints with a sort of humorous tolerance. Every day Harvey came and gazed soulfully into Solomon John's glazed eyes—which is a curious form of treatment for broken collar-bone, not sanctioned by any of the authorities who have written on the subject. It soon became evident that Harvey didn't care anything about the rib ; he had other designs. On a day he came to the point.

" Solomon John, would you like to have your sight back ? "

The blind man sat up in his cot and pressed his hands to his head.

" Do you mean it, sir ? " he gasped. " You—you wouldn't go to fool an old man about such a thing ? "

" Will you let me operate on you to-morrow ? "

" Anything you think best, sir. I don't quite seem to take it all in yet, sir—not the whole sense of it. But if it does come out right," added Solomon John in the simplicity of his soul, " won't Billy Wigg be surprised and tickled ! "

Billy Wigg raged mightily and rent the garments of his best friends, because he was shut out during the operation. When he was admitted after it was over he howled tumultuously, because Solomon John was racked with ether sickness, which he mistook for the throes of approaching dissolution. Followed then weeks during which Solomon John wore a white bandage, in place of the old green eye-shade, and at frequent intervals sang a solemn but joyous chant which Billy Wigg

accompanied with impatient yelps, because he couldn't make out what it meant:

> We're going to have our sight again,
> Billy Wigg, Billy Wigg:
> We're going to see the world again,
> Billy, my dog.

It was a long, nerve-trying wait, but the day finally came when the white bandages were removed. After the first gasp of rapture, Solomon John looked about him eagerly.

"Let me see my dog," he said. "Billy, is this you?" as the junior partner looked with anxious and puzzled eyes into his face. "Well, you're certainly a mighty handsome doggy, old boy." (Billy Wigg was homelier than a stack of hay in January, but the eyes that looked on him were as those of a mother when she first sees her babe.)

Unhappiness was the portion of Billy in the days that followed. A partner who wandered about unchaperoned and eluded obstacles without relying on his sense of touch was quite beyond his comprehension. So he sulked consistently until the time came for leaving the hospital. Then he chirked up a bit, thinking, presumably, that Solomon John would resume his old habit of blind reliance upon him when once the doors had closed behind them. Poor Billy!

It was three weeks after the operation that they left, Solomon John being discharged as cured. Harvey exulted. He said it was a great operation and proved things. I thought, myself, it was a mean trick on Billy Wigg. My unprofessional diagnosis was that he was on the road to becoming a chronic melancholiac.

The partners called on Harvey soon after the departure from the hospital. They were a study in psychological antithesis; Solomon John bubbling over with boyish happiness, Billy Wigg aged with the weight of woe he was carrying. The old man was touchingly grateful, but his ally surreptitiously essayed to bite a piece out of Harvey's leg when his back was turned. He nursed an unavenged wrong.

Months passed before we saw the pair again. We returned from our European vacation confident of finding them on the same old corner, and sure enough, there they were. But as we approached Harvey seized me by the arm.

"Good heavens! Bob! Look at the old man!"

"What's wrong with him?" said I. "He looks just the same as he used to."

" Just the same as he used to," echoed Harvey bitterly. " Eye-shade and all. All my work gone for nothing. Poor old boy ! "

" Billy Wigg's all right, anyway," said I, as that superior animal greeted us with every indication of excitement.

" Think so ? " said Harvey. " It strikes me that it isn't exactly welcome that he's trying to express." Then, in a louder voice to Solomon John, " How did it happen, old Sol ? "

At the sound of his voice Solomon John whirled about and started to thrust up his shade, as if involuntarily. Then he held out tremulous hands, crying : " What ! Is that you, Dr. Harvey ? God bless you, sir ! And is Mr. Roberts with you ? Well, well, but this does me good. You're a sight for sore eyes ! "

" Not for yours, Solomon John."

" And why not, then ? Whist ! I forgot," he broke off scaredly, jerking his head toward Billy Wigg, who held us all under jealous scrutiny. " Wait a breath." Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he whipped it out suddenly. A flight of coins scattered and twinkled and rolled diversely on the side-walk. " Dear, dear ! " cried the old man cunningly. " The old fool that I am ! I'll never be rich this way. Pick them up, Billy-boy."

Billy hated it, for picking small coins from a smooth pavement with lip and tooth is no easy job ; hated worse leaving his partner to two such unscrupulous characters as he well knew us to be. But he knew his business, and set about it with all his energies.

" Whisper now," said the senior partner as Billy swore under his breath at a slithery and elusive dime. " I've as fine a pair of eyes as you'd want for star-gazing at noonday."

" Then what on earth——"

" Sh-h-h ! Soft and easy ! The beast's cocking his little ear this way. Sure 'twas all on his account, sirs."

" On Billy's account ? " we both exclaimed in a breath.

" You didn't think I'd be faking it ? " he asked reproachfully.

We didn't ; and we said so. But we required further enlightenment.

" All on account of Billy Wigg there, sirs. The eyesight was a million blessings to me, but 'twas death to poor Billy. Not a pleasure in life would he take after we left the hospital. When I'd walk free and easy along the streets that looked so pretty to my old eyes, the dog'd be crazy with fear that some harm would come to me through him not leading me. At the last he just laid down and set out to die.

He'd not sleep, he'd not eat; and the eyes of him when he'd look at me were fit to make a man weep. I sent for a dog doctor—you being away, sir," put in Solomon John in polite parenthesis to my friend. "He says, 'The dog's dying of a broken heart. I've seen it before,' he says. 'What'll I do?' says I. 'He'll not be content till you are as you were before,' says the dog doctor. It was a minute before I sensed what he meant. Then my heart got thick and sick inside me. 'Blind?' I says. 'Is that what you mean?' 'You old fool,' says the dog doctor, 'can't you do a bit of play-acting? You've had enough practice in the part,' he says.

"Over I went and got my stick and put on the old shade that I hadn't ever thought to use again, thanks to you, sir, and tap-tapped across the floor to Billy Wigg. 'Come on, Billy,' says I; 'I want you to take me out for a walk." Billy jumped up with a kind of choky bark, and I hugged Billy and Billy hugged me, and—we've been doing business on the corner ever since."

There was a long pause. Harvey's expression was queer. I felt a little queer myself. It was a queer story, you know. Finally I asked the old man if business was good. Not that I particularly yearned to know, but it seemed to be time to say something.

"Nicely, sir, thank you," said Solomon John; "but I want to ask you, Is it a dishonesty, think you, for me to be wearing my shade like a blind man, and me able to see a flea on the end of Billy Wigg's tail the length of the block away? The Lord's been mighty good to me, sir—you and the Lord—giving me back my sight," said Solomon John simply, turning to Harvey, "and I wouldn't want to do anything that wasn't just square."

"I wouldn't let it weigh on my mind," said Harvey.

"I'd been thinking of a bit of a sign," proceeded Solomon John. "A friend printed it out for me, but the idea's my own."

After some fumbling under his coat he produced a placard artfully designed in large and flourishy letters. This was the order of it:

I Am NOT Blind
but
The Dog
Thinks I Am.

Billy Wigg seemed pleased because Harvey kicked me. No doubt

he would have been equally pleased if I had kicked Harvey. But it happened to be I who laughed. Harvey covered it up by soberly telling Solomon John that the sign was sure to be a grand success.

It was a grand success; quite stupendous, in fact. Old Sol did a business on the strength of it that would have made his eyes pop out if he hadn't kept them tight shut out of respect to Billy's prejudices. Reporters found his simplicity and naïve honesty a mine of "good stuff," and the picture of the firm was in all the papers. Billy Wigg began to suffer from swelled head; became haughty, not to say snobbish. But the fierce light of publicity wore upon the simple soul of Solomon John. He discarded the extraordinary placard, and was glad when he faded away from fame. Billy wasn't. He liked notoriety as well as authority.

Billy continued to exercise his authority. Perhaps tyranny would be nearer the mark. But even so meek a soul as that of Solomon John has limits of endurance beyond which it is not well to press. Only the other day it was that the old man said to Harvey, while Billy Wigg was otherwise engaged:

"It's as bad as being a henpecked husband, sir. Last night, as I was quietly stepping out the window to take a mug of ale with some friends, Billy wakes up, and the fuss he makes rouses the neighbourhood. Sure, he wouldn't hark to my going at all. You can see his teeth-marks on my shin this minute, sir. Could you give me something harmless to put in his food that'd make him sleep the sounder?"

Harvey said he'd think about it. He wasn't obliged to. Less than a week later he got a note in the mail:

"Dear Sir—I could not stand it any longer. I have Absconded to Buffalo to Take a Rest. Please be Good to Billy Wigg. I inclose his Board and Lodging any place you Put him. He is a good Dog, but too Bossy. I am Going to See Things till my Eyes get Tired. I will come Back in Future.—Yrs respectfully,

"Solomon J. Boles.

"*P.S.*—I know you will Treat Billy Good."

The enclosure was a twenty-dollar bill. It was the price of freedom, and cheap at the price.

JACK LONDON
1876–1916

THE SICKNESS OF LONE CHIEF

THIS is a tale that was told to me by two old men. We sat in the smoke of a mosquito-smudge, in the cool of the day, which was midnight; and ever and anon, throughout the telling, we smote lustily and with purpose at such of the winged pests as braved the smoke for a snack at our hides. To the right, beneath us, twenty feet down the crumbling bank, the Yukon gurgled lazily. To the left, on the rose-leaf rim of the low-lying hills, smouldered the sleepy sun, which saw no sleep that night nor was destined to see sleep for many nights to come.

The old men who sat with me and valorously slew mosquitoes were Lone Chief and Mutsak, erstwhile comrades in arms, and now withered repositories of tradition and ancient happening. They were the last of their generation and without honour among the younger set which had grown up on the farthest fringe of a mining civilisation. Who cared for tradition in these days, when spirits could be evoked from black bottles, and black bottles could be evoked from the complaisant white men for a few hours' sweat or a mangy fur? Of what potency the fearful rites and masked mysteries of shamanism, when daily that living wonder the steamboat coughed and spluttered up and down the Yukon, in defiance of all law a veritable fire-breathing monster? And of what value was hereditary prestige, when he who now chopped the most wood, or best conned a stern-wheeler through the island mazes, attained the chiefest consideration of his fellows?

Of a truth, having lived too long, they had fallen on evil days, these two old men, Lone Chief and Mutsak, and in the new order they were without honour or place. So they waited drearily for death, and the while their hearts warmed to the strange white man who shared with them the torments of the mosquito-smudge and lent ready ear to their tales of old time before the steamboat came.

"So a girl was chosen for me," Lone Chief was saying. His voice, shrill and piping, ever and again dropped plummet-like into a hoarse and rattling bass, and, just as one became accustomed to it, soaring

upward into the thin treble—alternate cricket chirpings and bull-frog croakings, as it were.

"So a girl was chosen for me," he was saying. "For my father, who was Kask-ta-ka, the Otter, was angered because I looked not with a needful eye upon women. He was an old man, and chief of his tribe. I was the last of his sons to be alive, and through me, only, could he look to see his blood go down among those to come after and as yet unborn. But know, O White Man, that I was very sick; and when neither the hunting nor the fishing delighted me, and by meat my belly was not made warm, how should I look with favour upon women? or prepare for the feast of marriage? or look forward to the prattle and troubles of little children?"

"Ay," Mutsak interrupted. "For had not Lone Chief fought in the arms of a great bear till his head was cracked and blood ran from out his ears?"

Lone Chief nodded vigorously. "Mutsak speaks true. In the time that followed, my head was well, and it was not well. For though the flesh healed and the sore went away, yet was I sick inside. When I walked, my legs shook under me, and when I looked at the light, my eyes became filled with tears. And when I opened my eyes, the world outside went around and around, and when I closed my eyes, my head inside went around and around, and all the things I have ever seen went around and around inside my head. And above my eyes there was a great pain, as though something heavy rested always upon them, or like a band that is drawn tight and gives much hurt. And speech was slow to me, and I waited long for each right word to come to my tongue. And when I waited not long, all manner of words crowded in, and my tongue spoke foolishness. I was very sick, and when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me——"

"Who was a young girl, and strong, my sister's child," Mutsak broke in. "Strong-hipped for children was Kasaan, and straight-legged and quick of foot. She made better moccasins than any of all the young girls, and the bark-rope she braided was the stoutest. And she had a smile in her eyes, and a laugh on her lips; and her temper was not hasty, nor was she unmindful that men give the law and women ever obey."

"As I say, I was very sick," Lone Chief went on. "And when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me, I said rather

should they make me ready for burial than for marriage. Whereat the face of my father went black with anger, and he said that I should be served according to my wish, and that I who was yet alive should be made ready for death as one already dead——"

"Which be not the way of our people, O White Man," spoke up Mutsak. "For know that these things that were done to Lone Chief it was our custom to do only to dead men. But the Otter was very angry."

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "My father, the Otter, was a man short of speech and swift of deed. And he commanded the people to gather before the lodge wherein I lay. And when they were gathered, he commanded them to mourn for his son who was dead——"

"And before the lodge they sang the death-song—*O-o-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ich-klu-kuk-ich-klu-kuk,*" wailed Mutsak, in so excellent an imitation that all the tendrils of my spine crawled and curved in sympathy.

"And inside the lodge," continued Lone Chief, "my mother blackened her face with soot, and flung ashes upon her head, and mourned for me as one already dead; for so had my father commanded. So Okiakuta, my mother, mourned with much noise, and beat her breasts and tore her hair; and likewise Hooniak, my sister, and Seenatah, my mother's sister; and the noise they made caused a great ache in my head, and I felt that I would surely and immediately die.

"And the elders of the tribe gathered about me where I lay and discussed the journey my soul must take. One spoke of the thick and endless forests where lost souls wandered crying, and where I, too, might chance to wander and never see the end. And another spoke of the big rivers, rapid with bad water, where evil spirits shrieked and lifted up their formless arms to drag one down by the hair. For these rivers, all said together, a canoe must be provided me. And yet another spoke of the storms, such as no live man ever saw, when the stars rained down out of the sky, and the earth gaped wide in many cracks, and all the rivers in the heart of the earth rushed out and in. Whereupon they that sat by me flung up their arms and wailed loudly; and those outside heard, and wailed more loudly. And as to them I was as dead, so was I to my own mind dead. I did not know when, or how, yet did I know that I had surely died.

"And Okiakuta, my mother, laid beside me my squirrel-skin

parka. Also she laid beside me my parka of caribou hide, and my raincoat of seal-gut, and my wet-weather muclucs, that my soul should be warm and dry on its long journey. Further, there was mention made of a steep hill, thick with briers and devil's-club, and she fetched heavy moccasins to make the way easy for my feet.

"And when the elders spoke of the great beasts I should have to slay, the young men laid beside me my strongest bow and straightest arrows, my throwing-stick, my spear and knife. And when the elders spoke of the darkness and silence of the great spaces my soul must wander through, my mother wailed yet more loudly and flung yet more ashes upon her head.

"And the girl, Kasaan, crept in, very timid and quiet, and dropped a little bag upon the things for my journey. And in the little bag, I knew, were the flint and steel and the well-dried tinder for the fires my soul must build. And the blankets were chosen which were to be wrapped around me. Also were the slaves selected that were to be killed that my soul might have company. There were seven of these slaves, for my father was rich and powerful, and it was fit that I, his son, should have proper burial. These slaves we had got in war from the Mukumuks, who live down the Yukon. On the morrow, Skolka, the shaman, would kill them, one by one, so that their souls should go questing with mine through the Unknown. Among other things, they would carry my canoe till we came to the big river, rapid with bad water. And there being no room, and their work being done, they would come no farther, but remain and howl for ever in the dark and endless forest.

"And as I looked on my fine warm clothes, and my blankets and weapons of war, and as I thought of the seven slaves to be slain, I felt proud of my burial and knew that I must be the envy of many men. And all the while my father, the Otter, sat silent and black. And all that day and night the people sang my death-song and beat the drums, till it seemed that I had surely died a thousand times.

"But in the morning my father arose and made talk. He had been a fighting man all his days, he said, as the people knew. Also the people knew that it were a greater honour to die fighting in battle than on the soft skins by the fire. And since I was to die anyway, it were well that I should go against the Mukumuks and be slain. Thus would I attain honour and chieftainship in the final abode of the dead, and thus would honour remain to my father who was the

Otter. Wherefore he gave command that a war party be made ready to go down the river. And that when we came upon the Mukumuks I was to go forth alone from my party, giving semblance of battle, and so be slain."

"Nay, but hear, O White Man!" cried Mutsak, unable longer to contain himself. "Skolka, the shaman, whispered long that night in the ear of the Otter, and it was his doing that Lone Chief should be sent forth to die. For the Otter being old, and Lone Chief the last of his sons, Skolka had it in mind to become chief himself over the people. And when the people had made great noise for a day and a night and Lone Chief was yet alive, Skolka was become afraid that he would not die. So it was the counsel of Skolka, with fine words of honour and deeds, that spoke through the mouth of the Otter."

"Ay," replied Lone Chief. "Well did I know it was the doing of Skolka, but I was unmindful, being very sick. I had no heart for anger, nor belly for stout words, and I cared little, one way or the other, only I cared to die and have done with it all. So, O White Man, the war party was made ready. No tried fighters were there, nor elders, crafty and wise—naught but five score of young men who had seen little fighting. And all the village gathered together above the bank of the river to see us depart. And we departed amid great rejoicing and the singing of my praises. Even thou, O White Man, wouldst rejoice at sight of a young man going forth to battle, even though doomed to die.

"So we went forth, the five score young men, and Mutsak came also, for he was likewise young and untried. And by command of my father, the Otter, my canoe was lashed on either side to the canoe of Mutsak and the canoe of Kannakut. Thus was my strength saved me from the work of the paddles, so that, for all of my sickness, I might make a brave show at the end. And thus we went down the river.

"Nor will I weary thee with the tale of the journey, which was not long. And not far above the village of the Mukumuks we came upon two of their fighting men in canoes, that fled at the sight of us. And then, according to the command of my father, my canoe was cast loose and I was left to drift down all alone. Also, according to his command, were the young men to see me die, so that they might return and tell the manner of my death. Upon this, my father, the Otter, and Skolka, the shaman, had been very clear, with stern promises of punishment in case they were not obeyed.

" I dipped my paddle and shouted words of scorn after the fleeing warriors. And the vile things I shouted made them turn their heads in anger, when they beheld that the young men held back, and that I came on alone. Whereupon, when they had made a safe distance, the two warriors drew their canoes somewhat apart and waited side by side for me to come between. And I came between, spear in hand, and singing the war-song of my people. Each flung a spear, but I bent my body, and the spears whistled over me, and I was unhurt. Then, and we were all together, we three, I cast my spear at the one to the right, and it drove into his throat and he pitched backward into the water.

" Great was my surprise thereat, for I had killed a man. I turned to the one on the left and drove strong with my paddle, to meet Death face to face ; but the man's second spear, which was his last, but bit into the flesh of my shoulder. Then was I upon him, making no cast, but pressing the point into his breast and working it through him with both my hands. And while I worked, pressing with all my strength, he smote me upon my head, once and twice, with the broad of his paddle.

" Even as the point of the spear sprang out beyond his back, he smote me upon the head. There was a flash, as of bright light, and inside my head I felt something give, with a snap—just like that, with a snap. And the weight that pressed above my eyes so long was lifted, and the band that bound my brows so tight was broken. And a great gladness came upon me, and my heart sang with joy.

" This be death, I thought ; wherefore I thought that death was very good. And then I saw the two empty canoes, and I knew that I was not dead, but well again. The blows of the man upon my head had made me well. I knew that I had killed, and the taste of the blood made me fierce, and I drove my paddle into the breast of the Yukon and urged my canoe toward the village of the Mukumuks. The young men behind me gave a great cry. I looked over my shoulder and saw the water foaming white from their paddles——"

" Ay, it foamed white from our paddles," said Mutsak. " For we remembered the command of the Otter, and of Skolka, that we behold with our own eyes the manner of Lone Chief's death. A young man of the Mukumuks, on his way to a salmon trap, beheld the coming of Lone Chief, and of the five score men behind him.

And the young man fled in his canoe, straight for the village, that alarm might be given and preparation made. But Lone Chief hurried after him, and we hurried after Lone Chief to behold the manner of his death. Only, in the face of the village, as the young man leaped to the shore, Lone Chief rose up in his canoe and made a mighty cast. And the spear entered the body of the young man above the hips, and the young man fell upon his face.

"Whereupon Lone Chief leaped up the bank war-club in hand, and a great war-cry on his lips, and dashed into the village. The first man he met was Itwilie, chief over the Mukumuks, and him Lone Chief smote upon the head with his war-club, so that he fell dead upon the ground. And for fear we might not behold the manner of his death, we too, the five score young men, leaped to the shore and followed Lone Chief into the village. Only the Mukumuks did not understand, and thought we had come to fight; so their bow-thongs sang and their arrows whistled among us. Whereat we forgot our errand, and fell upon them with our spears and clubs; and they being unprepared, there was great slaughter——"

"With my own hands I slew their shaman," proclaimed Lone Chief, his withered face a-work with memory of that old-time day. "With my own hands I slew him, who was a greater shaman than Skolka, our own shaman. And each time I faced a man, I thought, 'Now cometh Death'; and each time I slew the man, and Death came not. It seemed the breath of life was strong in my nostrils and I could not die——"

"And we followed Lone Chief the length of the village and back again," continued Mutsak. "Like a pack of wolves we followed him, back and forth, and here and there, till there were no more Mukumuks left to fight. Then we gathered together five score men-slaves, and double as many women, and countless children, and we set fire and burned all the houses and lodges, and departed. And that was the last of the Mukumuks."

"And that was the last of the Mukumuks," Lone Chief repeated exultantly. "And when we came to our own village, the people were amazed at our burden of wealth and slaves, and in that I was still alive they were more amazed. And my father, the Otter, came trembling with gladness at the things I had done. For he was an old man, and I the last of his sons. And all the tried fighting men came, and the crafty and wise, till all the people were gathered

together. And then I arose and, with a voice like thunder, commanded Skolka, the shaman, to stand forth——"

"Ay, O White Man," exclaimed Mutsak. "With a voice like thunder, that made the people shake at the knees and become afraid."

"And when Skolka had stood forth," Lone Chief went on, "I said that I was not minded to die. Also, I said it were not well that disappointment come to the evil spirits that wait beyond the grave. Wherefore I deemed it fit that the soul of Skolka fare forth into the Unknown, where doubtless it would howl for ever in the dark and endless forest. And then I slew him, as he stood there, in the face of all the people. Even I, Lone Chief, with my own hands, slew Skolka, the shaman, in the face of all the people. And when a murmuring arose, I cried aloud——"

"With a voice like thunder," prompted Mutsak.

"Ay, with a voice like thunder I cried aloud: 'Behold, O ye people! I am Lone Chief, slayer of Skolka, the false shaman! Alone among men have I passed down through the gateway of Death and returned again. Mine eyes have looked upon the unseen things. Mine ears have heard the unspoken words. Greater am I than Skolka the shaman. Greater than all shamans am I. Likewise am I a greater chief than my father, the Otter. All his days did he fight with the Mukumuks, and lo, in one day have I destroyed them all. As with the breathing of a breath have I destroyed them. Wherefore, my father, the Otter, being old, and Skolka, the shaman, being dead, I shall be both chief and shaman. Henceforth shall I be both chief and shaman to you, O my people. And if any man dispute my word, let that man stand forth!'

"I waited, but no man stood forth. Then I cried: 'Hoh! I have tasted blood! Now bring meat, for I am hungry. Break open the caches, tear down the fish-racks, and let the feast be big. Let there be merriment, and songs, not of burial, but marriage. And last of all let the girl Kasaan be brought. The girl Kasaan, who is to be the mother of the children of Lone Chief!'

"And at my words, and because that he was very old, my father, the Otter, wept like a woman, and put his arms about my knees. And from that day I was both chief and shaman. And great honour was mine, and all men yielded me obedience."

"Until the steamboat came," Mutsak prompted.

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "Until the steamboat came."

THE WHALE TOOTH

JACK LONDON

IT was in the early days in Fiji, when John Starhurst arose in the mission-house at Rewa Village and announced his intention of carrying the Gospel throughout all Viti Levu. Now Viti Levu means the "Great Land," it being the largest island in a group composed of many large islands, to say nothing of hundreds of small ones. Here and there on the coasts, living by most precarious tenure, was a sprinkling of missionaries, traders, bêche-de-mer fishers, and whaleship deserters. The smoke of the hot ovens arose under their windows, and the bodies of the slain were dragged by their doors on the way to the feasting.

The Lotu, or the Worship, was progressing slowly, and, often, in crablike fashion. Chiefs, who announced themselves Christians and were welcomed into the body of the chapel, had a distressing habit of backsliding in order to partake of the flesh of some favourite enemy. Eat or be eaten had been the law of the land; and eat or be eaten promised to remain the law of the land for a long time to come. There were chiefs, such as Tanoa, Tuiveikoso, and Tuikilakila, who had literally eaten hundreds of their fellow-men. But among these gluttons Ra Undreundre ranked highest. Ra Undreundre lived at Takiraki. He kept a register of his gustatory exploits. A row of stones outside his house marked the bodies he had eaten. This row was two hundred and thirty paces long, and the stones in it numbered eight hundred and seventy-two. Each stone represented a body. The row of stones might have been longer, had not Ra Undreundre unfortunately received a spear in the small of his back in a bush skirmish on Somo Somo and been served up on the table of Naungavuli, whose mediocre string of stones numbered only forty-eight.

The hard-worked, fever-stricken missionaries stuck doggedly to their task, at times despairing and looking forward for some special manifestation, some outburst of Pentecostal fire that would bring a glorious harvest of souls. But cannibal Fiji had remained obdurate. The frizzle-headed man-eaters were loath to leave their flesh-pots so

long as the harvest of human carcases was plentiful. Sometimes, when the harvest was too plentiful, they imposed on the missionaries by letting the word slip out that on such a day there would be a killing and a barbecue. Promptly the missionaries would buy the lives of the victims with stick tobacco, fathoms of calico, and quarts of trade-beads. Natheless the chiefs drove a handsome trade in thus disposing of their surplus live meat. Also, they could always go out and catch more.

It was at this juncture that John Starhurst proclaimed that he would carry the Gospel from coast to coast of the Great Land, and that he would begin by penetrating the mountain fastnesses of the headwaters of the Rewa River. His words were received with consternation.

The native teachers wept softly. His two fellow-missionaries strove to dissuade him. The King of Rewa warned him that the mountain dwellers would surely kai-kai him—kai-kai meaning "to eat"—and that he, the King of Rewa, having become Lotu, would be put to the necessity of going to war with the mountain dwellers. That he could not conquer them he was perfectly aware. That they might come down the river and sack Rewa Village he was likewise perfectly aware. But what was he to do? If John Starhurst persisted in going out and being eaten, there would be a war that would cost hundreds of lives.

Later in the day a deputation of Rewa chiefs waited upon John Starhurst. He heard them patiently, and argued patiently with them, though he abated not a whit from his purpose. To his fellow-missionaries he explained that he was not bent upon martyrdom; that the call had come for him to carry the Gospel into Viti Levu, and that he was merely obeying the Lord's wish.

To the traders, who came and objected most strenuously of all, he said: "Your objections are valueless. They consist merely of the damage that may be done your businesses. You are interested in making money, but I am interested in saving souls. The heathen of this dark land must be saved."

John Starhurst was not a fanatic. He would have been the first man to deny the imputation. He was eminently sane and practical. He was sure that his mission would result in good, and he had private visions of igniting the Pentecostal spark in the souls of the mountaineers and of inaugurating a revival that would sweep down out of the mountains and across the length and breadth of the Great Land from sea to sea and to the isles in the midst of the sea. There were no

wild lights in his mild grey eyes, but only calm resolution and an unfaltering trust in the Higher Power that was guiding him.

One man only he found who approved of his project, and that was Ra Vatu, who secretly encouraged him and offered to lend him guides to the first foothills. John Starhurst, in turn, was greatly pleased by Ra Vatu's conduct. From an incorrigible heathen, with a heart as black as his practices, Ra Vatu was beginning to emanate light. He even spoke of becoming Lotu. True, three years before he had expressed a similar intention, and would have entered the church had not John Starhurst entered objection to his bringing his four wives along with him. Ra Vatu had had economic and ethical objections to monogamy. Besides, the missionary's hair-splitting objection had offended him; and, to prove that he was a free agent and a man of honour, he had swung his huge war-club over Starhurst's head. Starhurst had escaped by rushing in under the club and holding on to him until help arrived. But all that was now forgiven and forgotten. Ra Vatu was coming into the church, not merely as a converted heathen, but as a converted polygamist as well. He was only waiting, he assured Starhurst, until his oldest wife, who was very sick, should die.

John Starhurst journeyed up the sluggish Rewa in one of Ra Vatu's canoes. This canoe was to carry him for two days, when, the head of navigation reached, it would return. Far in the distance, lifted into the sky, could be seen the great smoky mountains that marked the backbone of the Great Land. All day John Starhurst gazed at them with eager yearning.

Sometimes he prayed silently. At other times he was joined in prayer by Narau, a native teacher, who for seven years had been Lotu, ever since the day he had been saved from the hot oven by Dr. James Ellery Brown at the trifling expense of one hundred sticks of tobacco, two cotton blankets, and a large bottle of painkiller. At the last moment, after twenty hours of solitary supplication and prayer, Narau's ears had heard the call to go forth with John Starhurst on the mission to the mountains.

"Master, I will surely go with thee," he had announced.

John Starhurst had hailed him with sober delight. Truly, the Lord was with him thus to spur on so broken-spirited a creature as Narau.

"I am indeed without spirit, the weakest of the Lord's vessels," Narau explained, the first day in the canoe.

" You should have faith, stronger faith," the missionary chided him.

Another canoe journeyed up the Rewa that day. But it journeyed an hour astern, and it took care not to be seen. This canoe was also the property of Ra Vatu. In it was Erirola, Ra Vatu's first cousin and trusted henchman ; and in the small basket that never left his hand was a whale tooth. It was a magnificent tooth, fully six inches long, beautifully proportioned, the ivory turned yellow and purple with age. This tooth was likewise the property of Ra Vatu ; and in Fiji, when such a tooth goes forth, things usually happen. For this is the virtue of the whale tooth : Whoever accepts it cannot refuse the request that may accompany it or follow it. The request may be anything from a human life to a tribal alliance, and no Fijian is so dead to honour as to deny the request when once the tooth has been accepted. Sometimes the request hangs fire, or the fulfilment is delayed, with untoward consequences.

High up the Rewa, at the village of a chief, Mongondro by name, John Starhurst rested at the end of the second day of the journey. In the morning, attended by Narau, he expected to start on foot for the smoky mountains that were now green and velvety with nearness. Mongondro was a sweet-tempered, mild-mannered little old chief, short-sighted and afflicted with elephantiasis, and no longer inclined toward the turbulence of war. He received the missionary with warm hospitality, gave him food from his own table, and even discussed religious matters with him. Mongondro was of an inquiring bent of mind, and pleased John Starhurst greatly by asking him to account for the existence and beginning of things. When the missionary had finished his summary of the Creation according to Genesis he saw that Mongondro was deeply affected. The little old chief smoked silently for some time. Then he took the pipe from his mouth and shook his head sadly.

" It cannot be," he said. " I, Mongondro, in my youth, was a good workman with the adze. Yet three months did it take me to make a canoe—a small canoe, a very small canoe. And you say that all this land and water was made by one man——"

" Nay, was made by one God, the only true God," the missionary interrupted.

" It is the same thing," Mongondro went on, " that all the land and all the water, the trees, the fish, and bush, and mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars, were made in six days ! No, no. I tell you

that in my youth I was an able man, yet did it require me three months for one small canoe. It is a story to frighten children with ; but no man can believe it."

" I am a man," the missionary said.

" True, you are a man. But it is not given to my dark understanding to know what you believe."

" I tell you, I do believe that everything was made in six days."

" So you say, so you say," the old cannibal murmured soothingly.

It was not until after John Starhurst and Narau had gone off to bed that Erirola crept into the chief's house, and, after diplomatic speech, handed the whale tooth to Mongondro.

The old chief held the tooth in his hands for a long time. It was a beautiful tooth, and he yearned for it. Also, he divined the request that must accompany it. " No, no ; whale teeth were beautiful," and his mouth watered for it, but he passed it back to Erirola with many apologies.

. . . . . .

In the early dawn John Starhurst was afoot, striding along the bush trail in his big leather boots, at his heels the faithful Narau, himself at the heels of a naked guide lent him by Mongondro to show the way to the next village, which was reached by midday. Here a new guide showed the way. A mile in the rear plodded Erirola, the whale tooth in the basket slung on his shoulder. For two days more he brought up the missionary's rear, offering the tooth to the village chiefs. But village after village refused the tooth. It followed so quickly the missionary's advent that they divined the request that would be made, and would have none of it.

They were getting deep into the mountains, and Erirola took a secret trail, cut in ahead of the missionary, and reached the stronghold of the Buli of Gatoka. Now the Buli was unaware of John Starhurst's imminent arrival. Also, the tooth was beautiful—an extraordinary specimen, while the colouring of it was of the rarest order. The tooth was presented publicly. The Buli of Gatoka, seated on his best mat, surrounded by his chief men, three busy fly-brushers at his back, deigned to receive from the hand of his herald the whale tooth presented by Ra Vatu and carried into the mountains by his cousin, Erirola. A clapping of hands went up at the acceptation of the present, the assembled headmen, heralds, and fly-brushers crying aloud in chorus :

" A ! woi ! woi ! woi ! A ! woi ! woi ! woi ! A tabua levu ! woi ! woi ! A mudua, mudua, mudua ! "

" Soon will come a man, a white man," Erirola began, after the proper pause. " He is a missionary man, and he will come to-day. Ra Vatu is pleased to desire his boots. He wishes to present them to his good friend, Mongondro, and it is in his mind to send them with the feet along in them, for Mongondro is an old man and his teeth are not good. Be sure, O Buli, that the feet go along in the boots. As for the rest of him, it may stop here."

The delight in the whale tooth faded out of the Buli's eyes, and he glanced about him dubiously. Yet he had already accepted the tooth.

" A little thing like a missionary does not matter," Erirola prompted.

" No, a little thing like a missionary does not matter," the Buli answered, himself again. " Mongondro shall have the boots. Go, you young men, some three or four of you, and meet the missionary on the trail. Be sure you bring back the boots as well."

" It is too late," said Erirola. " Listen ! He comes now."

Breaking through the thicket of brush, John Starhurst, with Narau close on his heels, strode upon the scene. The famous boots, having filled in wading the stream, squirted fine jets of water at ever step. Starhurst looked about him with flashing eyes. Upborne by an unwavering trust, untouched by doubt or fear, he exulted in all he saw. He knew that since the beginning of time he was the first white man ever to tread the mountain stronghold of Gatoka.

The grass houses clung to the steep mountain side or overhung the rushing Rewa. On either side towered a mighty precipice. At the best, three hours of sunlight penetrated that narrow gorge. No cocoanuts nor bananas were to be seen, though dense tropic vegetation overran everything, dripping in airy festoons from the sheer lips of the precipices and running riot in all the crannied ledges. At the far end of the gorge the Rewa leaped eight hundred feet in a single span, while the atmosphere of the rock fortress pulsed to the rhythmic thunder of the fall.

From the Buli's house John Starhurst saw emerging the Buli and his followers.

" I bring you good tidings," was the missionary's greeting.

" Who has sent you ? " the Buli rejoined quietly.

" God."

" It is a new name in Viti Levu," the Buli grinned. " Of what islands, villages, or passes may he be chief ? "

" He is the chief over all islands, all villages, all passes," John Starhurst answered solemnly. " He is the Lord over heaven and earth, and I am come to bring His word to you."

" Has he sent whale teeth ? " was the insolent query.

" No, but more precious than whale teeth is the——"

" It is the custom between chiefs to send whale teeth," the Buli interrupted. " Your chief is either a niggard, or you are a fool, to come empty-handed into the mountains. Behold, a more generous than you is before you."

So saying, he showed the whale tooth he had received from Erirola.

Narau groaned.

" It is the whale tooth of Ra Vatu," he whispered to Starhurst, " I know it well. Now we are undone."

" A gracious thing," the missionary answered, passing his hand through his long beard and adjusting his glasses. " Ra Vatu has arranged that we should be well received."

But Narau groaned again, and backed away from the heels he had dogged so faithfully.

" Ra Vatu is soon to become Lotu," Starhurst explained, " and I have come bringing the Lotu to you."

" I want none of your Lotu," said the Buli proudly. " And it is in my mind that you will be clubbed this day."

The Buli nodded to one of his big mountaineers, who stepped forward, swinging a club. Narau bolted into the nearest house, seeking to hide among the women and mats ; but John Starhurst sprang in under the club and threw his arms around his executioner's neck. From this point of vantage he proceeded to argue. He was arguing for his life, and he knew it ; but he was neither excited nor afraid.

" It would be an evil thing for you to kill me," he told the man. " I have done you no wrong, nor have I done the Buli wrong."

So well did he cling to the neck of the one man that they dared not strike with their clubs. And he continued to cling and to dispute for his life with those who clamoured for his death.

" I am John Starhurst," he went on calmly. " I have laboured in Fiji for three years, and I have done it for no profit. I am here among you for good. Why should any man kill me ? To kill me will not profit any man."

The Buli stole a look at the whale tooth. He was well paid for the deed.

The missionary was surrounded by a mass of naked savages, all struggling to get at him. The death song, which is the song of the oven, was raised, and his expostulations could no longer be heard. But so cunningly did he twine and wreathe his body about his captor's that the death-blow could not be struck. Erirola smiled, and the Buli grew angry.

"Away with you!" he cried. "A nice story to go back to the coast—a dozen of you, and one missionary without weapons, weak as a woman, overcoming all of you."

"Wait, O Buli," John Starhurst called out from the thick of the scuffle, "and I will overcome even you. For my weapons are Truth and Right, and no man can withstand them."

"Come to me, then," the Buli answered, "for my weapon is only a poor miserable club, and, as you say, it cannot withstand you."

The group separated from him, and John Starhurst stood alone, facing the Buli, who was leaning on an enormous, knotted war-club.

"Come to me, missionary man, and overcome me," the Buli challenged.

"Even so will I come to you and overcome you," John Starhurst made answer, first wiping his spectacles, and settling them properly, then beginning his advance.

The Buli raised the club and waited.

"In the first place, my death will profit you nothing," began the argument.

"I leave the answer to my club," was the Buli's reply.

And to every point he made the same reply, at the same time watching the missionary closely in order to forestall that cunning run-in under the lifted club. Then, and for the first time, John Starhurst knew that his death was at hand. He made no attempt to run in. Bareheaded, he stood in the sun and prayed aloud—the mysterious figure of the inevitable white man, who, with Bible, bullet, or rum bottle, has confronted the amazed savage in his every stronghold. Even so stood John Starhurst in the rock fortress of the Buli of Gatoka.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do," he prayed. "O Lord! have mercy upon Fiji. Have compassion for Fiji. O Jehovah, hear us for His sake, Thy Son, whom Thou didst give, that through Him all men might also become Thy children. From Thee

we came, and our mind is that to Thee we may return. The land is dark, O Lord, the land is dark. But Thou art mighty to save. Reach out Thy hand, O Lord, and save Fiji, poor cannibal Fiji."

The Buli grew impatient.

"Now will I answer thee," he muttered, at the same time swinging his club with both hands.

Narau, hiding among the women and the mats, heard the impact of the blow and shuddered. Then the death song arose, and he knew his beloved missionary's body was being dragged to the oven as he heard the words:

"Drag me gently. Drag me gently."

"For I am the champion of my land."

"Give thanks! Give thanks! Give thanks!"

Next, a single voice arose out of the din, asking:

"Where is the brave man?"

A hundred voices bellowed the answer:

"Gone to be dragged into the oven and cooked."

"Where is the coward?" the single voice demanded.

"Gone to report!" the hundred voices bellowed back. "Gone to report! Gone to report!"

Narau groaned in anguish of spirit. The words of the old song were true. He was the coward, and nothing remained to him but to go and report.

HALLIE ERMINIE RIVES
B. 1878

IN THE WAKE OF WAR

THERE is nothing so elusive yet so fascinating as a chance resemblance. We walk a street crowded with thousands of human atoms like ourselves, yet each meaningless, unindividual. The mass has the consistency of a stream of water parted by a stone. Suddenly one of these atoms acquires form, colour, substance, and character; its individuality strikes a chord in the brain. A thousand disassociate fragments—memory-worn strands of time and place—struggle to coalesce, to reweave themselves into a pattern we once knew. Our thoughts give aid. Recollection puzzles itself, finds itself impotent, rages at its own powerlessness. At such a moment the mind recurs again and again with painful insistence to the problem, and the chance resemblance, by reason of aggravation, acquires an importance wholly disproportionate. The man who pursues such a will-o'-the-wisp memory does so protesting, in spite of himself.

It was in some such frame of mind that Brent Maxwell stood looking out across the desolate hillside. The landscape still mourned, in blackened stone walls and thinned forests, the devastation of Sherman's march to the sea. The bare unpromise of the scene was in his soul. He knew the gaunt poverty that follows in the wake of war. He had fought loyally for the Union. And now, after fifteen years of reconstruction, he had learned that Appomattox had dawned only upon the first chapter of defeat. The fierce patriotism which had led him, a youth of enthusiasm and dreams of the glory of sacrifice, to leave his place and portion in the North when the first call sounded, and the earnestness of intention with which he had flung himself into the newly breathing industrial life of a Southern city, had had time to cool and sober. In spite of success the very intensity of the struggle against adverse conditions had bred in him a resentment against the necessity which made green fields a desert, plantation a waste, and a smiling country a cemetery of unmarked graves. Something of the dogged sadness which hung on the people among whom he elected to dwell had centred into him. He had lived down the hatred and

the sneer, but the process had made him bitter against the circumstances which had given this hatred rise.

On this early morning his thoughts, which had been busy estimating the possibilities of the farm, whose deeds he had in his pocket, and whose foreclosure had brought him from his own city, had been suddenly arrested and turned from their channel. A rattling vehicle had passed him, containing two figures—a man and a woman. The faces of both interested him. The woman's was sad and sober-sweet, surmounted by pearl-grey hair. There was a little colour in her cheeks. The man had dead white hair and beard, with face blue-tinged and shifting eyes of yellow. He wore a heavy butternut overcoat and a knitted nubia of childishly bright colours.

There was something in this last face that started reverberating echoes in Maxwell's brain. An intangible hand was at work tying together loose ends of recollection. He knew and yet he did not know. Wherever he looked, as he plodded over the farm land, he saw this blue face and dodging gaze. It came before him with an absurd incongruity and yet with a reiterate malevolence.

The sun was high as he walked back toward the village, past the great, grey-columned house whose shambling porticoes pointed to a past of wealth and grandeur. As he neared the gate a sudden cry made him quicken his steps. A repeating scream—a man's, yet wolf-like, rising and falling with monotonous inflections—filled all the hollows with sound. Its note had a quality of the animal that thickened the hearer's blood. It came from the house. Maxwell broke into a run, burst open the gate and rushed toward the porch.

Rounding a clump of evergreens he saw a strange spectacle. Seated on the ground was the blue-faced man, his fingers clutching the stubble, his lips emitting the beast-like screams which had brought Maxwell from the roadway. Bending over him, with her back toward the gate, was the lady of the sad face and the pearl-grey hair. She was smoothing the thin fringe from the sunken temples, bending now and then to lay her lips caressingly and sobbingly upon his head. From under her arm the yellow eyes looked out straight toward Maxwell. He felt them pass shiftily across his face with a sense of shrinking repulsion. The volume of screams showed no abatement.

The tones with which the woman sought to soothe this outburst were exquisitely tender. "Poor Victor!" she was saying; "poor, poor boy!"

Maxwell had stopped short at the mad lustre of those yellow eyes; the woman had not heard his approach. With a strange tightening of the throat he shrank behind a bush and retreated to the road, looking fearfully back over his shoulder. Throughout the long walk back to the village hotel, at every turning, this picture started before him—a slight, grey-gowned figure with hands whose trembling motions suggested the settling of a dove to guard its young, and from under whose caress gleamed out topaz eyes in which lurked the devil of madness.

He stared over the table of the low-ceiled, smoky-beamed dining-room, unheeding the conversation, his mind pursuing the vagrant resemblance of the morning. He came to himself with a sort of shock to hear his neighbour say: "That's the first time I've seen ole Vic Brockman for two years. Miss Ma'y Ann took him drivin' this mornin'—you ought to seen 'em. The ole fellow had on a nubia that had as many colours as a peacock's tail. Queer how he hangs onto life all these years," he continued reflectively. "It'd be a blessin' if he'd shuffle off. Speakin' of women—there's a woman for you! Job Stacker, when he lived on the next farm, used to say that she cared for that idiot brother of hers ever since the war like a baby. If he'd got killed out and out, instead of comin' home with no top to his head and no sense in it, it'd been better for her. Then she could have married that sweetheart of hers and had troubles of her own."

He turned to Maxwell. "I was talkin'," he said, "of Miss Brockman, who owns the Pool place—that big white house over the hill. It's a pity the mortgage changed hands. I suppose Miss Ma'y Ann is going to be sold out. It's hard. Old Squire Pool, her grandfather, was the biggest man in four counties, and befo' the war her ma was the high-headest girl you ever saw. Wonder who got that mortgage?"

In the evening, as Maxwell and the village lawyer, who was Justice of the Peace, Conveyancer, and Notary Public all in one, walked in the fading light up the hill toward the property which was so soon to be sent to the hammer, there was small conversation between them. The papers requiring the final signature protruded from Maxwell's great-coat pocket. His mind was wandering through a labyrinth of recollection, pursuing the phantom of a blue face, surmounted by rough, white hair, and two eyes shot with feline yellow, which met his and wavered away in ferret uneasiness. The likeness clung to

him with a wilful persistence, and he swept his hand impatiently across his eyes as if to banish the thing that baffled him.

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As the two men seated themselves in the lamplight of the great room, which yet bore the inextinguishable marks of aristocracy, Maxwell became unpleasantly aware of a huddled object on a sofa, which seemed to create in itself a centre of attraction. The errand was not a pleasant one, though relieved by the serene face and low tones that belong to the gentlewoman; but in the lax face of old Victor Brockman was another element—an element of arrested progress, of piteous recoil—the genius of unconscious despair. It drew Maxwell while it repelled him. He found himself turning his head to gaze upon it.

He realised in the midst of a genial sentence that the yellow eyes had ceased their roving, and had settled, fixed and stealthy, upon his face. The aggravating resemblance again caught his attention.

Thereafter he ceased to be himself—ceased in some inexplicable way to feel his will and intention master of the situation. The idiot's gaze had got upon his nerves. He found himself shifting in his seat, pushing his chair back by slow degrees to bring the sofa between him and it. Now and then he turned his eyes unwillingly to meet that look: the yellow eyes had ceased to twitch, and now rested with, it seemed to him, a quiet, dreamy hatred upon his own. The gaze affected him strangely; it angered him. He felt himself put out by this meaningless persistence. His smooth sentences flowed with less ease, and he felt a nervous contraction in the muscles of his throat.

Miss Mary Ann had drawn nearer to the squat occupant of the sofa, and her hand, trembling unwontedly, he thought, reached out now and then to touch the frayed sleeve. And surely the lawyer was looking at him closely. Maxwell felt himself sweating, and yet internally scoffing at this strange mood that had smitten him.

The situation was a simple one, and yet it had suddenly become impossible to him. He, Brent Maxwell, landowner, dealer in farm properties, had come to present an official paper for signature. He had done it scores of times, and yet the usual conversation with which custom softens the unpleasant alternatives of business failure into kindly and courteous agreement had become suddenly a way of pain—a chapter of indefinable reproach. A look of vacant, yellow eyes, grown steadfast, was making this hour one of loathing and horror.

As the last words were spoken and the necessary signatures were affixed, he snatched the papers from the lawyer's hands, crushed them into his pocket, and in sudden revulsion, his tense nerves released, sprang to his feet.

The effect upon the huddled figure opposite him was instantaneous and terrible. It cringed backward, with a shrinking gesture of fear and agony. Its palsied arms, shaking and uncertain, wavered before its face. A shriek came from its lips, but this time not the monotonous, wordless wail of habit, but an articulate cry: "My God! My head! Don't strike me again!"

Maxwell dimly heard the sobbing cry with which the sister's arms went round the cowering, abject figure, and the lawyer's abrupt ejaculation of astonishment and reassurance, as he rushed to the door and flung himself out into the frosty evening. His breath was coming heavily, and his fingers worked nervously in and out of clinched fists. As the sky opened before him, a vision hurled itself with the appalling directness of a thunderbolt before him—a vision of an acre of bloody, trampled sward, iron-sown, and blue with pungent wreaths of smoke. In the foreground a dismantled gun, prone upon whose stock a figure lay, with blackened face and tattered grey uniform, and over it a second figure swinging a clubbed musket, remorselessly cruel with the lust of war. The crest of that spattered knoll strewn with quiet forms—these two alone fiercely erect. Then the clubbed weapon descended. From the limp figure stretched across the gun rose two protesting arms; two hazel eyes looked from beneath the bloody mat of hair, and a voice shrill and terrifying: "My God! My head! don't strike me again!"

The vision blurred. Gusts of smoke came in between. Did the blue figure strike again? Did it? *Did it?*

Maxwell threw his hands toward the night sky that flared with that quick rose of condemnation and died again, as though appealing and inviting doom. The vision had scarce faded into the dim of the early night sky when the lawyer came down the steps. It was as though he had approached, black-robed and grotesque, from the corner of the dimming picture—a vengeance witnessing and impeaching, binding him, the Brent Maxwell of that savage battery charge, to the Brent Maxwell of this day, a strong man flying from the piteous pallor of a shrunken and deranged wreck.

The one upon whom this sudden panic of soul had crashed like a

falling tower gripped him fiercely by the arms. " The man in there," he said hoarsely, " the man with the blue face and yellow eyes—the man that looked at me ! Did you see him look at me ? "

The other shrank back half fearfully. " Why, Maxwell," he said, " what's the matter ? It was merely a fit of some sort. I thought you knew he was crazy. Why, man, you're shaking ! Come along and we'll get something to warm us up."

" Did you see him put up his hands ? "

The lawyer drew away his arm almost angrily. " Heavens ! " he said, " you're almost as bad as the old man himself. He's crazy, I tell you, plumb crazy, and has been ever since they brought him home from the war. He was struck in the head by a shell or something."

" Yes, yes. Where ? Where was it ? What battle was it ? "

" I've always heard it was at Missionary Ridge." The match he struck against his boot-heel burned, sputtering, as he bit the end from a cigar.

Maxwell suddenly drew from his pocket the packet of papers ; the parchment crackled as he reached forward and held a curling corner to the flame. While the lawyer stood in a maze Maxwell waved it, a flaming funnel, around his head until it scorched his fingers. As he dropped it to the ground, a mass of slowly blackening embers, a white shadow sprang out of the surrounding circle of blackness. It was Miss Mary Ann.

" Miss Ma'y Ann," cried the lawyer, " do you see what he's doing ? He's burned up the mortgage ! He's burned it up ! That's all that's left of it there on the ground ! "

Miss Mary Ann stepped forward half fearfully, her fascinated eyes on the glowing firebrand between them. She clasped her hands together. " Sir," she said painfully, " sir "—then she stopped.

An overmastering desire seized Maxwell to take upon himself the act of that dead day—to shout to them both that he, *he*, had been asked mercy and had denied it. It was the right of war, but now, after all these years, it had recoiled upon him in shame. Circumstance had again put in his hand the weapon ; the lust of acquisition called upon him to strike, but as he stood face to face with this new victim, out of that red mist of the stained past that cry had sounded, and his hand dropped nerveless before the same helpless accusing eyes. He would have shouted that it was not charity, not kindness, that

spared that roof, but self-accusation—a yearning for atonement and for absolution.

He received her broken words of gratitude with a sense of shame upon his soul, and the lawyer's bluff comments upon his benefaction pierced him like swords of searing.

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As Maxwell turned again toward the village, he rested his gaze upon the hillside, sleeping under the early stars. Field and knoll were covered silvery with the sheen of hoar-frost lances. It seemed the dwarf symbol of buried armies—thousands upon thousands of the dead, who died with upthrust bayonets still standing to guard in death the integrity of homes. And standing thus, with the sorrow of his thought upon him, Maxwell cried to his own soul, no less than to his land, to glory, to power, to war, and to victory :

" What have you done ? What have you done ? "

IRVIN S. COBB
B. 1876

THE BELLED BUZZARD

THERE was a swamp known as Little Niggerwool, to distinguish it from Big Niggerwool, which lay across the river. It was traversable only by those who knew it well—an oblong stretch of tawny mud and tawny water, measuring maybe four miles its longest way and two miles roughly at its widest; and it was full of cypress and stunted swamp oak, with edgings of canebrake and rank weeds; and in one place, where a ridge crossed it from side to side, it was snaggled like an old jaw with dead tree trunks, rising close-ranked and thick as teeth. It was untenanted of living things—except, down below, there were snakes and mosquitoes, and a few wading and swimming fowl; and up above, those big woodpeckers that the country people called logcocks—larger than pigeons, with flaming crests and spiky tails—swooping in their long loping flight from snag to snag, always just out of gunshot of the chance invader, and uttering a strident cry which matched those surroundings so fitly that it might well have been the voice of the swamp itself.

On one side Little Niggerwool drained its saffron waters off into a sluggish creek, where summer ducks bred, and on the other it ended abruptly at a natural bank of high ground, along which the county turnpike ran. The swamp came right up to the road and thrust its fringe of reedy, weedy undergrowth forward as though in challenge to the good farm lands that were spread beyond the barrier. At the time I am speaking of it was midsummer, and from these canes and weeds and water-plants there came a smell so rank as almost to be overpowering. They grew thick as a curtain, making a blank green wall taller than a man's head.

Along the dusty stretch of road fronting the swamp nothing living had stirred for half an hour or more. And so at length the weed-stems rustled and parted, and out from among them a man came forth silently and cautiously. He was an old man—an old man who had once been fat, but with age had grown lean again, so that now his skin was by odds too large for him. It lay on the back of his

neck in folds. Under the chin he was pouched like a pelican and about the jowls was wattled like a turkey gobbler.

He came out upon the road slowly and stopped there, switching his legs absently with the stalk of a horseweed. He was in his shirt-sleeves—a respectable, snuffy old figure; evidently a man deliberate in words and thoughts and actions. There was something about him suggestive of an old staid sheep that had been engaged in a clandestine transaction and was afraid of being found out.

He had made amply sure no one was in sight before he came out of the swamp, but now, to be doubly certain, he watched the empty road—first up, then down—for a long half minute, and fetched a sighing breath of satisfaction. His eyes fell upon his feet, and, taken with an idea, he stepped back to the edge of the road and with a wisp of crabgrass wiped his shoes clean of the swamp mud, which was of a different colour and texture from the soil of the upland. All his life Squire H. B. Gathers had been a careful, canny man, and he had need to be doubly careful on this summer morning. Having disposed of the mud on his feet, he settled his white straw hat down firmly upon his head, and, crossing the road, he climbed a stake-and-rider fence laboriously and went plodding sedately across a weed-field and up a slight slope towards his house, half a mile away, upon the crest of the little hill.

He felt perfectly natural—not like a man who had just taken a fellow-man's life—but natural and safe, and well satisfied with himself and with his morning's work. And he was safe; that was the main thing—absolutely safe. Without hitch or hindrance he had done the thing for which he had been planning and waiting and longing all these months. There had been no slip or mischance; the whole thing had worked out as plainly and simply as two and two make four. No living creature except himself knew of the meeting in the early morning at the head of Little Niggerwool, exactly where the squire had figured they should meet; none knew of the device by which the other man had been lured deeper and deeper in the swamp to the exact spot where the gun was hidden. No one had seen the two of them enter the swamp; no one had seen the squire emerge, three hours later, alone.

The gun, having served its purpose, was hidden again, in a place no mortal eye would ever discover. Face downward, with a hole between his shoulder-blades, the dead man was lying where he might

lie undiscovered for months or for years, or for ever. His pedlar's pack was buried in the mud so deep that not even the probing crawfishes could find it. He would never be missed probably. There was but the slightest likelihood that inquiry would ever be made for him—let alone a search. He was a stranger and a foreigner, the dead man was, whose comings and goings made no great stir in the neighbourhood, and whose failure to come again would be taken as a matter of course—just one of those shiftless, wandering Dagoes, here to-day and gone to-morrow. That was one of the best things about it—these Dagoes never had any people in this country to worry about them or look for them when they disappeared. And so it was all over and done with, and nobody the wiser. The squire clapped his hands together briskly with the air of a man dismissing a subject from his mind for good, and mended his gait.

He felt no stabbings of conscience. On the contrary, a glow of gratification filled him. His house was saved from scandal; his present wife would philander no more—before his very eyes—with these young Dagoes, who came from nobody knew where, with packs on their backs and persuasive, wheedling tongues in their heads. At this thought the squire raised his head and considered his homestead. It looked good to him—the small white cottage among the honey locusts, with beehives and flower-beds about it; the tidy white-washed fence; the sound outbuildings at the back, and the well-tilled acres round about.

At the fence he halted and turned about, carelessly and casually, and looked back along the way he had come. Everything was as it should be—the weed-field steaming in the heat; the empty road stretching along the crooked ridge like a long grey snake sunning itself; and beyond it, massing up, the dark, cloaking stretch of swamp. Everything was all right, but—— The squire's eyes, in their loose sacs of skin, narrowed and squinted. Out of the blue arch away over yonder a small black dot had resolved itself and was swinging to and fro, like a mote. A buzzard—hey? Well, there were always buzzards about on a clear day like this. Buzzards were nothing to worry about—almost any time you could see one buzzard, or a dozen buzzards if you were a mind to look for them.

But this particular buzzard now—wasn't he making for Little Niggerwool? The squire did not like the idea of that. He had not thought of the buzzards until this minute. Sometimes when cattle

strayed the owners had been known to follow the buzzards, knowing mighty well that if the buzzards led the way to where the stray was, the stray would be past the small salvage of hide and hoofs—but the owner's doubts would be set at rest for good and all.

There was a grain of disquiet in this. The squire shook his head to drive the thought away—yet it persisted, coming back like a midge dancing before his face. Once at home, however, Squire Gathers deported himself in a perfectly normal manner. With the satisfied proprietorial eye of an elderly husband who has no rivals, he considered his young wife, busied about her household duties. He sat in an easy-chair upon his front gallery and read his yesterday's *Courier-Journal* which the rural carrier had brought him ; but he kept stepping out into the yard to peer up into the sky and all about him. To the second Mrs. Gathers he explained that he was looking for weather signs. A day as hot and still as this one was a regular weather-breeder ; there ought to be rain before night.

" Maybe so," she said ; " but looking's not going to bring rain."

Nevertheless the squire continued to look. There was really nothing to worry about ; still at midday he did not eat much dinner, and before his wife was half through with hers he was back on the gallery. His paper was cast aside and he was watching. The original buzzard—or, anyhow, he judged it was the first one he had seen—was swinging back and forth in great pendulum swings, but closer down toward the swamp—closer and closer—until it looked from that distance as though the buzzard flew almost at the level of the tallest snags there. And on beyond this first buzzard, coursing above him, were other buzzards. Were there four of them ? No ; there were five—five in all.

Such is the way of the buzzard—that shifting black question-mark which punctuates a Southern sky. In the woods a shoat or a sheep or a horse lies down to die. At once, coming seemingly out of nowhere, appears a black spot, up five hundred feet or a thousand in the air. In broad loops and swirls this dot swings round and round and round, coming a little closer to earth at every turn and always with one particular spot upon the earth for the axis of its wheel. Out of space also other moving spots emerge and grow larger as they tack and jibe and drop nearer, coming in their leisurely buzzard way to the feast. There is no haste—the feast will wait. If it is a dumb creature that has fallen stricken the grim coursers will sooner

or later be assembled about it and alongside it, scrouging ever closer and closer to the dying thing, with awkward out-thrustings of their naked necks and great dust-raising flaps of the huge, unkempt wings; lifting their feathered shanks high and stiffly like old crippled grave-diggers in overalls that are too tight—but silent and patient all, offering no attack until the last tremor runs through the stiffening carcass and the eyes glaze over. To humans the buzzard pays a deeper meed of respect—he hangs aloft longer; but in the end he comes. No scavenger shark, no carrion crab, ever chambered more grisly secrets in his digestive processes than this big charnel bird. Such is the way of the buzzard.

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The squire missed his afternoon nap, a thing that had not happened in years. He stayed on the front gallery and kept count. Those moving distant black specks typified uneasiness for the squire—not fear exactly, or panic, or anything akin to it, but a nibbling, nagging kind of uneasiness. Time and again he said to himself that he would not think about them any more; but he did—unceasingly.

By supper time there were seven of them.

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He slept light and slept badly. It was not the thought of that dead man lying yonder in Little Niggerwool that made him toss and fume while his wife snored gently alongside him. It was something else altogether. Finally his stirrings roused her and she asked him drowsily what ailed him. Was he sick? Or bothered about anything?

Irritated, he answered her snappishly. Certainly nothing was bothering him, he told her. It was a hot enough night—wasn't it? And when a man got a little along in life he was apt to be a light sleeper—wasn't that so? Well, then? She turned upon her side and slept again with her light, purring snore. The squire lay awake, thinking hard and waiting for day to come.

At the first faint pink-and-grey glow he was up and out upon the gallery. He cut a comic figure standing there in his shirt in the half light, with the dewlap at his throat dangling grotesquely in the neck opening of the unbuttoned garment, and his bare bowed legs showing, splotched and varicose. He kept his eyes fixed on the skyline below, to the south. Buzzards are early risers too. Presently, as the heavens shimmered with the miracle of sunrise, he could make them out—six or seven, or maybe eight.

An hour after breakfast the squire was on his way down through the weed-field to the county road. He went half eagerly, half unwillingly. He wanted to make sure about those buzzards. It might be that they were aiming for the old pasture at the head of the swamp. There were sheep grazing there—and it might be that a sheep had died. Buzzards were notoriously fond of sheep, when dead. Or, if they were pointed for the swamp, he must satisfy himself exactly what part of the swamp it was. He was at the stake-and-rider fence when a mare came jogging down the road, drawing a buggy with a man in it. At sight of the squire in the field the man pulled up.

"Hi, squire!" he saluted. "Goin' somewheres?"

"No; jest knockin' about," the squire said—"jest sorter lookin' the place over."

"Hot agin—ain't it?" said the other.

The squire allowed that it was, for a fact, mighty hot. Commonplaces of gossip followed this—county politics and a neighbour's wife sick of breakbone fever down the road a piece. The subject of crops succeeded inevitably. The squire spoke of the need of rain. Instantly he regretted it, for the other man, who was by way of being a weather wiseacre, cocked his head aloft to study the sky for any signs of clouds.

"Wonder whut all them buzzards are doin' yonder, squire," he said, pointing upward with his whipstock.

"Whut buzzards—where?" asked the squire with an elaborate note of carelessness in his voice.

"Right yonder, over Little Niggerwool—see 'em there?"

"Oh, yes," the squire made answer. "Now I see 'em. They ain't doin' nothin', I reckin—jest flyin' round same as they always do in clear weather."

"Must be somethin' dead over there!" speculated the man in the buggy.

"A hawg probably," said the squire promptly — almost too promptly. "There's likely to be hawgs usin' in Niggerwool. Bristow, over on the other side from here—he's got a big drove of hawgs."

"Well, mebbe so," said the man; "but hawgs is a heap more apt to be feedin' on high ground, seems like to me. Well, I'll be gittin' along towards town. G'day, squire." And he slapped the lines down on the mare's flank and jogged off through the dust.

He could not have suspected anything—that man couldn't. As

the squire turned away from the road and headed for his house he congratulated himself upon that stroke of his in bringing in Bristow's hogs; and yet there remained this disquieting note in the situation, that buzzards flying, and especially buzzards flying over Little Nigger-wool, made people curious—made them ask questions.

He was half-way across the weed-field when, above the hum of insect life, above the inward clamour of his own busy speculations, there came to his ear dimly and distantly a sound that made him halt and cant his head to one side the better to hear it. Somewhere, a good way off, there was a thin, thready, broken strain of metallic clinking and clanking—an eerie ghost-chime ringing. It came nearer and became plainer—tonk-tonk-tonk; then the tonks all running together briskly.

A sheepbell or a cowbell—that was it; but why did it seem to come from overhead, from up in the sky, like? And why did it shift so abruptly from one quarter to another—from left to right and back again to left? And how was it that the clapper seemed to strike so fast? Not even the breachiest of breachy young heifers could be expected to tinkle a cowbell with such briskness. The squire's eye searched the earth and the sky, his troubled mind giving to his eye a quick and flashing scrutiny. He had it. It was not a cow at all. It was not anything that went on four legs.

One of the loathly flock had left the others. The orbit of his swing had carried him across the road and over Squire Gathers' land. He was sailing right toward and over the squire now. Craning his flabby neck, the squire could make out the unwholesome contour of the huge bird. He could see the ragged black wings—a buzzard's wings are so often ragged and uneven—and the naked throat; the slim, naked head; the big feet folded up against the dingy belly. And he could see a bell too—an undersized cowbell—that dangled at the creature's breast and jangled incessantly. All his life nearly Squire Gathers had been hearing about the Belled Buzzard. Now with his own eye he was seeing him.

Once, years and years and years ago, some one trapped a buzzard, and before freeing it clamped about its skinny neck a copper band with a cowbell pendent from it. Since then the bird so ornamented has been seen a hundred times—and heard oftener—over an area as wide as half the continent. It has been reported, now in Kentucky, now in Texas, now in North Carolina—now anywhere between the Ohio River and

the Gulf. Crossroads correspondents take their pens in hand to write to the country papers that on such and such a date, at such a place, So-and-So saw the Belled Buzzard. Always it is the Belled Buzzard, never a belled buzzard. The Belled Buzzard is an institution.

There must be more than one of them. It seems hard to believe that one bird, even a buzzard in his prime, and protected by law in every Southern state and known to be a bird of great age, could live so long and range so far and wear a clinking cowbell all the time! Probably other jokers have emulated the original joker; probably if the truth were known there have been a dozen such; but the country people will have it that there is only one Belled Buzzard—a bird that bears a charmed life and on his neck a never-silent bell.

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Squire Gathers regarded it a most untoward thing that the Belled Buzzard should have come just at this time. The movements of ordinary, unmarked buzzards mainly concerned only those whose stock had strayed; but almost anybody with time to spare might follow this rare and famous visitor, this belled and feathered junkman of the sky. Supposing now that some one followed it to-day—maybe followed it even to a certain thick clump of cypress in the middle of Little Niggerwool!

But at this particular moment the Belled Buzzard was heading directly away from that quarter. Could it be following him? Of course not! It was just by chance that it flew along the course the squire was taking. But, to make sure, he veered off sharply, away from the footpath into the high weeds so that the startled grasshoppers sprayed up in front of him in fan-like flights.

He was right; it was only a chance. The Belled Buzzard swung off too, but in the opposite direction, with a sharp tonking of its bell, and, flapping hard, was in a minute or two out of hearing and sight, past the trees to the westward.

Again the squire skimped his dinner, and again he spent the long drowsy afternoon upon his front gallery. In all the sky there were now no buzzards visible, belled or unbelled—they had settled to earth somewhere; and this served somewhat to soothe the squire's pestered mind. This does not mean, though, that he was by any means easy in his thoughts. Outwardly he was calm enough, with the ruminative judicial air befitting the oldest justice of the peace in the county; but, within him, a little something gnawed unceasingly at

his nerves like one of those small white worms that are to be found in seemingly sound nuts. About once in so long a tiny spasm of the muscles would contract the dewlap under his chin. The squire had never heard of that play, made famous by a famous player, wherein the murdered victim was a pedlar too, and a clamouring bell the voice of unappeasable remorse in the murderer's ear. As a strict churchgoer the squire had no use for players or for play-actors, and so was spared that added canker to his conscience. It was bad enough as it was.

That night, as on the night before, the old man's sleep was broken and fitful and disturbed by dreaming in which he heard a metal clapper striking against a brazen surface. This was one dream that came true. Just after daybreak he heaved himself out of bed with a flop of his broad bare feet upon the floor, and stepped to the window and peered out. Half seen in the pinkish light, the Belled Buzzard flapped directly over his roof and flew due south, right toward the swamp—drawing a direct line through the air between the slayer and the victim—or, anyway, so it seemed to the watcher, grown suddenly tremulous.

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Knee-deep in yellow swamp water the squire squatted, with his shotgun cocked and loaded and ready, waiting to kill the bird that now typified for him guilt and danger and an abiding great fear. Gnats plagued him and about him frogs croaked. Almost overhead a log-cock clung lengthwise to a snag, watching him. Snake doctors, limber, long insects with bronze bodies and filmy wings, went back and forth like small living shuttles. Other buzzards passed and repassed, but the squire waited, forgetting the cramps in his elderly limbs and the discomfort of the water in his shoes.

At length he heard the bell. It came nearer and nearer, and the Belled Buzzard swung overhead not sixty feet up, its black bulk a fair target against the blue. He aimed and fired, both barrels bellowing at once and a fog of thick powder smoke enveloping him. Through the smoke he saw the bird careen, and its bell jangled furiously; then the buzzard righted itself and was gone, fleeing so fast that the sound of its bell was hushed almost instantly. Two long wing feathers drifted slowly down; torn discs of gunwadding and shredded green scraps of leaves descended about the squire in a little shower.

He cast his empty gun from him, so that it fell in the water and

Jack London

disappeared; and he hurried out of the swamp as fast as his shaky legs would take him, splashing himself with mire and water to his eyebrows. Mucked with mud, breathing in great gulps, trembling, a suspicious figure to any eye, he burst through the weed curtain and staggered into the open, his caution all gone and a vast desperation fairly choking him—but the grey road was empty and the field beyond the road was empty and, except for him, the whole world seemed empty and silent.

As he crossed the field Squire Gathers composed himself. With plucked handfuls of grass he cleansed himself of much of the swamp mire that coated him over; but the little white worm that gnawed at his nerves had become a cold snake that was coiled about his heart, squeezing it tighter and tighter!

. . . . . .

This episode of the attempt to kill the Belled Buzzard occurred in the afternoon of the third day. In the forenoon of the fourth, the weather being still hot, with cloudless skies and no air stirring, there was a rattle of warped wheels in the squire's lane and a hail at his yard fence. Coming out upon his gallery from the innermost darkened room of his house, where he had been stretched upon a bed, the squire shaded his eyes from the glare and saw the constable of his own magisterial district sitting in a buggy at the gate, waiting.

The old man went down the dirt-path slowly, almost reluctantly, with his head twisted up sidewise, listening, watching; but the constable sensed nothing strange about the other's gait and posture; the constable was full of the news he brought. He began to unload the burden of it without preamble.

"Mornin', Squire Gathers. There's been a dead man found in Little Niggerwool—and you're wanted."

He did not notice that the squire was holding on with both hands to the gate, but he did notice that the squire had a sick look out of his eyes and a dead, pasty colour in his face; and he noticed—but attached no meaning to it—that when the squire spoke his voice seemed flat and hollow.

"Wanted—fur—whut?" The squire forced the words out of his throat, pumped them out fairly.

"Why, to hold the inquest," explained the constable. "The coroner's sick abed, and he said you bein' the nearest jestice of the peace you should serve."

"Oh," said the squire with more ease. "Well, where is it—the body?"

"They taken it to Bristow's place and put it in his stable for the present. They brought it out over on that side and his place was the nearest. If you'll hop in here with me, squire, I'll ride you right over there now. There's enough men already gathered to make up a jury, I reckin."

"I—I ain't well," demurred the squire. "I've been sleepin' porely these last few nights. It's the heat," he added quickly.

"Well, suh, you don't look very brash, and that's a fact," said the constable; "but this here job ain't goin' to keep you long. You see it's in such shape—the body is—that there ain't no way of makin' out who the feller was nor whut killed him. There ain't nobody reported missin' in this county as we know of, either; so I jedge a verdict of a unknown person dead from unknown causes would be about the correct thing. And we kin git it all over mighty quick and put him underground right away, suh—if you'll go along now."

"I'll go," agreed the squire, almost quivering in his new-born eagerness. "I'll go right now." He did not wait to get his coat or to notify his wife of the errand that was taking him. In his shirt-sleeves he climbed into the buggy, and the constable turned his horse and clucked him into a trot. And now the squire asked the question that knocked at his lips demanding to be asked—the question the answer to which he yearned for and dreaded.

"How did they come to find—it?"

"Well, suh, that's a funny thing," said the constable. "Early this mornin' Bristow's oldest boy—that one they call Buddy—he heard a cowbell over in the swamp and so he went to look; Bristow's got cows, as you know, and one or two of 'em is belled. And he kept on followin' after the sound of it till he got way down into the thickest part of them cypress slashes that's near the middle there; and right there he run acrost it—this body.

"But, suh, squire, it wasn't no cow at all. No, suh; it was a buzzard with a cowbell on his neck—that's what it was. Yes, suh; that there same old Belled Buzzard he's come back agin and is hangin' round. They tell me he ain't been seen round here sence the year of the yellow fever—I don't remember myself, but that's whut they tell me. The niggers over on the other side are right smartly worked up

over it. They say—the niggers do—that when the Belled Buzzard comes, it's a sign of bad luck for somebody, shore ! "

The constable drove on, talking on, garrulous as a guinea-hen. The squire didn't heed him. Hunched back in the buggy, he hearkened only to those busy inner voices filling his mind with thundering portents. Even so, his ear was first to catch above the rattle of the buggy wheels the far-away, faint tonk-tonk ! They were about half-way to Bristow's place then. He gave no sign, and it was perhaps half a minute before his companion heard it too.

The constable jerked the horse to a standstill and craned his neck over his shoulder.

" Well, by doctors ! " he cried, " if there ain't the old scoundrel now, right here behind us ! I kin see him plain as day—he's got an old cowbell hitched to his neck ; and he's shy a couple of feathers out of one wing. By doctors, that's somethin' you won't see every day ! In all my born days I ain't never seen the beat of that ! "

Squire Gathers did not look ; he only cowered back farther under the buggy top. In the pleasing excitement of the moment his companion took no heed, though, of anything except the Belled Buzzard.

" Is he followin' us ? " asked the squire in a curiously flat, weighted voice.

" Which—him ? " answered the constable, still stretching his neck. " No, he's gone now—gone off to the left—just a-zoonin', like he'd done forgot somethin'."

And Bristow's place was to the left ! But there might still be time. To get the inquest over and the body underground—those were the main things. Ordinarily humane in his treatment of stock, Squire Gathers urged the constable to greater speed. The horse was lathered, and his sides heaved wearily as they pounded across the bridge over the creek which was the outlet to the swamp and emerged from a patch of woods in sight of Bristow's farm buildings.

The house was set on a little hill among cleared fields, and was in other respects much like the squire's own house except that it was smaller and not so well painted. There was a wide yard in front with shade trees and a lye hopper and a well-box, and a paling fence with a stile in it instead of a gate. At the rear, behind a clutter of outbuildings—a barn, a smokehouse, and a corncrib—was a little peach orchard, and flanking the house on the right there was a good-sized cowyard, empty of stock at this hour, with feed-racks ranged in

a row against the fence. A two-year-old negro child, bareheaded and barefooted and wearing but a single garment, was grubbing busily in the dirt under one of these feed-racks.

To the front fence a dozen or more riding-horses were hitched, flicking their tails at the flies; and on the gallery men in their shirt-sleeves were grouped. An old negro woman, with her head tied in a bandanna and a man's old slouch hat perched upon the bandanna, peeped out from behind a corner. There were gaunt hound dogs wandering about, sniffing uneasily.

Before the constable had the horse hitched the squire was out of the buggy and on his way up the footpath, going at a brisker step than the squire usually travelled. The men on the porch hailed him gravely and ceremoniously, as befitting an occasion of solemnity. Afterward some of them recalled the look in his eye; but at the moment they noted it—if they noted it at all—subconsciously.

For all his haste the squire, as was also remembered later, was almost the last to enter the door; and before he did enter he halted and searched the flawless sky as though for signs of rain. Then he hurried on after the others, who clumped single file along a narrow little hall, the bare, uncarpeted floor creaking loudly under their heavy farm shoes, and entered a good-sized room that had in it, among other things, a high-piled feather bed and a cottage organ—Bristow's best room, now to be placed at the disposal of the law's representatives for the inquest. The squire took the largest chair and drew it to the very centre of the room, in front of a fireplace, where the grate was banked with withering asparagus ferns. The constable took his place formally at one side of the presiding official. The others sat or stood about where they could find room—all but six of them whom the squire picked for his coroner's jury, and who backed themselves against the wall.

The squire showed haste. He drove the preliminaries forward with a sort of tremulous insistence. Bristow's wife brought a bucket of fresh drinking-water and a gourd, and almost before she was out of the room and the door closed behind her the squire had sworn his jurors and was calling the first witness, who it seemed likely would also be the only witness—Bristow's oldest boy. The boy wriggled in confusion as he sat on a cane-bottomed chair facing the old magistrate. All there, barring one or two, had heard his story a dozen times already, but now it was to be repeated under oath; and so they

bent their heads, listening as though it were a brand-new tale. All eyes were on him ; none were fastened on the squire as he, too, gravely bent his head, listening—listening.

The witness began—but had no more than started when the squire gave a great, screeching howl and sprang from his chair and staggered backward, his eyes popped and the pouch under his chin quivering as though it had a separate life all its own. Startled, the constable made toward him and they struck together heavily and went down —both on their all fours—right in front of the fireplace.

The constable scrambled free and got upon his feet, in a squat of astonishment, with his head craned ; but the squire stayed upon the floor, face downward, his feet flopping among the rustling asparagus greens—a picture of slavering animal fear. And now his gagging screech resolved itself into articulate speech.

" I done it ! " they made out his shrieked words. " I done it ! I own up—I killed him ! He aimed fur to break up my home and I tolled him off into Niggerwool and killed him ! There's a hole in his back if you'll look fur it. I done it—oh, I done it—and I'll tell everything jest like it happened if you'll jest keep that thing away from me ! Oh, my Lawdy ! Don't you hear it ? It's a-comin' clos'ter and clos'ter—it's a-comin' after me ! Keep it away——" His voice gave out and he buried his head in his hands and rolled upon the gaudy carpet.

And now they all heard what he had heard first—they heard the tonk-tonk-tonk of a cowbell, coming near and nearer toward them along the hallway without. It was as though the sound floated along. There was no creak of footsteps upon the loose, bare boards —and the bell jangled faster than it would dangling from a cow's neck. The sound came right to the door and Squire Gathers wallowed among the chair legs.

The door swung open. In the doorway stood a negro child, bare-footed and naked except for a single garment, eyeing them with serious, rolling eyes—and, with all the strength of his two puny arms, proudly but solemnly tolling a small rusty cowbell he had found in the cowyard.

BENJAMIN ROSENBLATT

B. 1880

ZELIG

OLD Zelig was eyed askance by his brethren. No one deigned to call him " Reb " Zelig, nor to prefix to his name the American equivalent—" Mr." " The old one is a barrel with a stave missing," knowingly declared his neighbours. " He never spends a cent ; and he belongs nowheres." For " to belong," on New York's East Side, is of no slight importance. It means being a member in one of the numberless congregations. Every decent Jew must join " A Society for Burying its Members," to be provided at least with a narrow cell at the end of the long road. Zelig was not even a member of one of these. " Alone, like a stone," his wife often sighed. In the cloakshop where Zelig worked he stood daily, brandishing his heavy iron on the sizzling cloth, hardly ever glancing about him. The workmen despised him, for during a strike he returned to work after two days' absence. He could not be idle, and thought with dread of the Saturday that would bring him no pay envelope.

His very appearance seemed alien to his brethren. His figure was tall, and of cast-iron mould. When he stared stupidly at something, he looked like a blind Samson. His grey hair was long, and it fell in dishevelled curls on gigantic shoulders somewhat inclined to stoop. His shabby clothes hung loosely on him ; and, both summer and winter, the same old cap covered his massive head.

He had spent most of his life in a sequestered village in Little Russia, where he tilled the soil and even wore the national peasant costume. When his son and only child, a poor widower with a boy of twelve on his hands, emigrated to America, the father's heart bled. Yet he chose to stay in his native village at all hazards, and to die there. One day, however, a letter arrived from the son that he was sick ; this sad news was followed by words of a more cheerful nature—" and your grandson Moses goes to public school. He is almost an American ; and he is not forced to forget the God of Israel. He will soon be confirmed. His Bar Mitsva is near." Zelig's wife wept three days and nights upon the receipt of this letter. The old man said little ; but he began to sell his few possessions.

To face the world outside his village spelled agony to the poor rustic. Still, he thought he would get used to the new home which his son had chosen. But the strange journey with locomotive and

steamship bewildered him dreadfully; and the clamour of the metropolis, into which he was flung pell-mell, altogether stupefied him. With a vacant air he regarded the Pandemonium, and a petrifaction of his inner being seemed to take place. He became " a barrel with a stave missing." No spark of animation visited his eye. Only one thought survived in his brain, and one desire pulsed in his heart : to save money enough for himself and family to hurry back to his native village. Blind and dead to everything, he moved about with a dumb, lacerating pain in his heart—he longed for home. Before he found steady employment he walked daily with titanic strides through the entire length of Manhattan, while children and even adults often slunk into byways to let him pass. Like a huge monster he seemed, with an arrow in his vitals. In the shop where he found a job at last, the workmen feared him at first ; but ultimately finding him a harmless giant, they more than once hurled their sarcasms at his head. Of the many men and women employed there, only one person had the distinction of getting fellowship from old Zelig. That person was the Gentile watchman or janitor of the shop, a little blond Pole with an open mouth and frightened eyes. And many were the witticisms aimed at this uncouth pair. " The big one looks like an elephant," the joker of the shop would say ; " only he likes to be fed on pennies instead of peanuts."

" Oi, oi, his nose would betray him," the " philosopher " of the shop chimed in ; and during the dinner hour he would expatiate thus : " You see, money is his blood. He starves himself to have enough dollars to go back to his home ; the Pole told me all about it. And why should he stay here ? Freedom of religion means nothing to him, he never goes to synagogue ; and freedom of the press ? Bah—he never even reads the conservative *Tageblatt* ! "

Old Zelig met such gibes with stoicism. Only rarely would he turn up the whites of his eyes, as if in the act of ejaculation ; but he would soon contract his heavy brows into a scowl and emphasise the last with a heavy thump of his sizzling iron.

When the frightful cry of the massacred Jews in Russia rang across the Atlantic, and the Ghetto of Manhattan paraded one day through the narrow streets draped in black, through the erstwhile clamorous thoroughfares steeped in silence, stores and shops bolted, a wail of anguish issuing from every door and window—the only one remaining in his shop that day was old Zelig. His fellow-workmen did not call upon him to join the procession. They felt the incongruity of " this brute " in line with mourners in muffled tread. And the Gentile watch-

man reported the next day that the moment the funeral dirge of the music echoed from a distant street, Zelig snatched off the greasy cap he always wore, and in confusion instantly put it on again. " All the rest of the day," the Pole related with awe, " he looked wilder than ever, and so thumped with his iron on the cloth that I feared the building would come down."

But Zelig paid little heed to what was said about him. He dedicated his existence to the saving of his earnings, and only feared that he might be compelled to spend some of them. More than once his wife would be appalled in the dark of night by the silhouette of old Zelig in nightdress sitting up in bed and counting a bundle of bank notes which he always replaced under his pillow. She frequently upbraided him for his niggardly nature, for his warding off all requests outside the pittance for household expense. She pleaded, exhorted, wailed. He invariably answered: " I haven't a cent by my soul." She pointed to the bare walls, the broken furniture, their beggarly attire. " Our son is ill," she moaned; " he needs special food and rest: and our grandson is no more a baby; he'll soon need money for his studies. Dark is my world; you are killing both of them."

Zelig's colour vanished; his old hands shook with emotion. The poor woman thought herself successful, but the next moment he would gasp: " Not a cent by my soul."

One day old Zelig was called from his shop because his son had a sudden severe attack; and, as he ascended the stairs of his home, a neighbour shouted: " Run for a doctor; the patient cannot be revived." A voice as if from a tomb suddenly sounded in reply, " I haven't a cent by my soul." The hallway was crowded with the ragged tenants of the house, mostly women and children; from far off were heard the rhythmic cries of the mother. The old man stood for a moment as if chilled from the roots of his hair to the tips of his fingers. Then the neighbours heard his sepulchral mumble: " I'll have to borrow somewheres, beg some one," as he retreated down the stairs. He brought a physician; and when the grandson asked for money to go for the medicine, Zelig snatched the prescription and hurried away, still murmuring: " I'll have to borrow, I'll have to beg."

Late that night the neighbours heard a wail issuing from old Zelig's apartment; and they understood that the son was no more.

Zelig's purse was considerably thinned. He drew from it with palsied fingers for all burial expenses, looking about him in a dazed way. Mechanically he performed the Hebrew rites for the dead, which

his neighbours taught him. He took a knife and made a deep gash in his shabby coat ; then he removed his shoes, seated himself on the floor, and bowed his poor old head, tearless, benumbed.

The shop stared when the old man appeared after the prescribed three days' absence. Even the Pole dared not come near him. A film seemed to coat his glaring eye, deep wrinkles contracted his features, and his muscular frame appeared to shrink even as one looked. From that day on he began to starve himself more than ever. The passion for sailing back to Russia, " to die at home at last," lost but little of its original intensity. Yet there was something now which by a feeble thread bound him to the New World.

In a little mound on the Base Achaim, the " House of Life," under a tombstone engraved with old Hebrew script, a part of himself lay buried. But he kept his thoughts away from that mound. How long and untiringly he kept on saving ! Age gained on him with rapid strides. He had little strength left for work, but his dream of home seemed nearing its realisation. Only a few more weeks, a few more months ! And the thought sent a glow of warmth to his frozen frame. He would even condescend now to speak to his wife concerning the plans he had formed for their future welfare, more especially when she revived her pecuniary complaints.

" See what you have made of us, of the poor child," she often argued, pointing to the almost grown grandson. " Since he left school, he works for you, and what will be the end ? "

At this, Zelig's heart would suddenly clutch, as if conscious of some indistinct, remote fear. His answers touching the grandson were abrupt, incoherent, as of one who replies to a question unintelligible to him, and is in constant dread lest his interlocutor should detect it.

Bitter misgivings concerning the boy began to mingle with the reveries of the old man. At first he hardly gave a thought to him. The boy grew noiselessly. The ever-surging tide of secular studies that runs so high on the East Side caught this boy in its wave. He was quietly preparing himself for college. In his eagerness to accumulate the required sum, Zelig paid little heed to what was going on around him ; and now, on the point of victory, he became aware with growing dread of something abrewing out of the common. He sniffed suspiciously ; and one evening he overheard the boy talking to grandma about his hatred of Russian despotism, about his determination to remain in the States. He ended by entreating her to plead with grandpa to promise him the money necessary for a college education.

Old Zelig swooped down upon them with wild eyes. " Much you need it, you stupid," he thundered at the youngster in unrestrained fury. " You will continue your studies in Russia, durak, stupid." His timid wife, however, seemed suddenly to gather courage and she exploded : " Yes, you should give your savings for the child's education here. Woe is me, in the Russian universities no Jewish children are taken." Old Zelig's face grew purple. He rose, and abruptly seated himself again. Then he rushed madly, with a raised, menacing arm, at the boy in whom he saw the formidable foe—the foe he had so long been dreading.

But the old woman was quick to interpose with a piercing shriek : " You madman, look at the sick child ; you forget from what our son died, going out like a flickering candle."

That night Zelig tossed feverishly on his bed. He could not sleep. For the first time it dawned upon him what his wife meant by pointing to the sickly appearance of the child. When the boy's father died, the physician declared that the cause was tuberculosis.

He rose to his feet. Beads of cold sweat glistened on his forehead, trickled down his cheeks, his beard. He stood pale and panting. Like a startling sound the thought entered his mind—the boy, what should be done with the boy ?

The dim, blue night gleamed in through the windows. All was shrouded in the city silence, which yet has a peculiar, monotonous ring in it. Somewhere, an infant awoke with a sickly cry which ended in a suffocating cough. The grizzled old man bestirred himself, and with hasty steps he tiptoed to the place where the boy lay. For a time he stood gazing on the pinched features, the under-sized body of the lad ; then he raised one hand, passed it lightly over the boy's hair, stroking his cheeks and chin. The boy opened his eyes, looked for a moment at the shrivelled form bending over him, then he petulantly closed them again. " You hate to look at granpa, he is your enemy, eh ? " The aged man's voice shook and sounded like that of the child's awaking in the night. The boy made no answer ; but the old man noticed how the frail body shook, how the tears rolled, washing the sunken cheeks.

For some moments he stood mute, then his form literally shrank to that of a child's as he bent over the ear of the boy and whispered hoarsely : " You are weeping, eh ? Granpa is your enemy, you stupid ! To-morrow I will give you the money for the college. You hate to look at granpa ; he is your enemy, eh ? "

SEUMAS O'BRIEN
B. 1880

THE WHALE AND THE GRASSHOPPER

WHEN Standish McNeill started talking to his friend Felix O'Dowd as they walked at a leisurely pace towards the town of Castlegregory on a June morning, what he said was: "The world is a wonderful place when you come to think about it, an' Ireland is a wonderful place an' so is America, an' though there are lots of places like each other there's no place like Ballysantamalo. When there's not sunshine there, there's moonshine, an' the handsomest women in the world live there, an' nowhere else except in Ireland or the churchyards could you find such decent people."

"Decency," said Felix, "when you're poor is extravagance, and bad example when you're rich."

"And why?" said Standish.

"Well," said Felix, "because the poor imitate the rich an' the rich give to the poor an' when the poor give to each other they have nothing of their own."

"That's communism you're talking," said Standish, "an' that always comes from education an' enlightenment. Sure if the poor weren't dacent they'd be rich an' if the rich were dacent they'd be poor an' if every one had a conscience they'd be less millionaires."

"'Tis a poor bird that can't pick for himself."

"But suppose a bird had a broken wing an' couldn't fly to where the pickings were?" said Felix.

"Well, then bring the pickings to him. That would be charity."

"But charity is decency and wisdom is holding your tongue when you don't know what you're talking about."

"If the people of Ballysantamalo are so decent, how is it that there are so many bachelors there? Do you think it right to have all the young women worrying their heads off reading trashy novels an' doin' all sorts of silly things like fixin' their hair in a way that was never intended by nature an' doin' so for years an' years an' havin' nothin' in the end but the trouble of it all."

"Well, 'tis hard blamin' the young men, because every young

lady you meet looks better to you than the last until you meet the next, an' so you go on to another until you're so old that no one would marry you at all unless you had lots of money, a bad liver, an' a shaky heart."

"An old man without any sense, lots of money, a bad liver, an' a shaky heart can always get a young lady to marry him," said Felix, "though rheumatics, gout, an' a wooden leg are just as good in such a case."

"Every bit," said Standish, "but there's nothin' like a weak constitution, a cold climate, an' a tendency to pneumonia."

"Old men are quare," said Felix.

"They are," said Standish, "an' if they were all only half as wise as they think they are then they'd be only young fools in the world. I don't wonder a bit at the suffragettes. An' a time will come when we won't know men from women unless some one tells us so."

"Wisha, 'tis my belief that there will be a great reaction some day, because women will never be able to stand the strain of doin' what they please without encountering opposition. When a man falls in love he falls into trouble likewise, an' when a woman isn't in trouble you may be sure that there's something wrong with her."

"Well," said Standish, "I think we will leave the women where the devil left St. Peter——"

"Where was that?" asked Felix.

"Alone," answered Standish.

"That would be all very fine if they stayed there," said Felix.

"Now," said Standish, "as I was talking of me travels in foreign parts, I want to tell you about the morning I walked along the beach at Ballysantamalo, an' a warm morning it was too. So I ses to meself, 'Standish McNeill,' ses I, 'what kind of a fool of a man are you? Why don't you take a swim for yourself?' So I did take a swim, an' I swam to the rocks where the seals goes to get their photographs taken; an' while I was havin' a rest for meself I noticed a grasshopper sittin' a short distance away, an', pon me word, but he was the most sorrowful lookin' grasshopper I ever saw before or since. Then all of a sudden a monster whale comes up from the sea and lies down beside him an' ses: 'Well,' ses he, 'is that you? Who'd ever think of finding you here. Why, there's nothing strange under the sun but the ways of woman.'

"'Tis me that's here, then,' said the grasshopper. 'Me grandmother died last night an' she wasn't insured either.'

" ' The practice of negligence is the curse of mankind and the root of sorrow,' ses the whale. ' I suppose the poor old soul had her fill of days, an' sure we all must die, an' 'tis cheaper to be dead than alive at any time. A man never knows that he's dead when he is dead an' he never knows he's alive until he's married.'

" ' You're a great one to expatiate on things you know nothing about, like the barbers and the cobblers,' said the grasshopper. ' I only want to know if you're coming to the funeral to-morrow ? '

" ' I'm sorry I can't,' ses the whale. ' Me grandfather is getting married, for the tenth time, an' as I was in China on the last few occasions I must pay me respects by being present at to-morrow's festivities,' ses he.

" ' I'm sorry you can't come,' ses the grasshopper, ' because you are heartily welcome an' you'd add prestige to the ceremony besides.'

" ' I know that,' ses the whale, ' but America doesn't care much about ceremony.'

" ' Who told you that ? ' ses the grasshopper.

" ' Haven't I me eyesight, an' don't I read the newspapers,' ses the whale.

" ' You mustn't read the society columns, then,' ses the grasshopper.

" ' Wisha, for the love of St. Crispin,' ses the whale, ' have they society columns in the American newspapers ? '

" ' Indeed they have,' ses the grasshopper, ' and they oftentimes devote a few columns to other matters when the dressmakers don't be busy.'

" ' America is a strange country surely, a wonderful country, not to say a word about the length and breadth of it. I swam around it twice last week without stoppin', to try an' reduce me weight, an' would you believe me that I was tired after the journey, but the change of air only added to me proportions.'

" ' That's too bad,' said the grasshopper.

" ' Are you an American ? ' said the whale.

" ' Of course I am,' ses the grasshopper. ' You don't think 'tis the way I'd be born at sea an' no nationality at all like yourself. I'm proud of me country.'

" ' And why, might I ask ? '

" ' Well, don't we produce distinguished Irishmen ? Don't we make Americans of the Europeans and Europeans of the Americans ? Think of all the connoisseurs who wouldn't buy a work of art in their

own country when they could go to Europe and pay ten times its value for the pot-boilers that does be turned out in the studios of Paris and London.'

" ' There's nothin' like home industry,' ses the whale, ' in a foreign country, I mean.'

" ' After all, who knows anything about a work of art but the artist ? and very little he knows about it, either. A work of art is like a flower, it grows, it happens. That's all. An' unless you charge the devil's own price for it, people will think you are cheating them.'

" ' Wisha, I suppose the best any one can do is to take all you can get, an' if you want to be a philanthropist, give away what you don't want,' ses the grasshopper.

" ' All worth missing I catches,' ses the whale, ' an' all worth catchin' I misses, like the fisherwoman who missed the fish and caught a crab. How's things in Europe ? I didn't see the papers this morning.'

" ' Europe is in a bad way,' ses the grasshopper. ' She was preaching civilisation for centuries so that she might be prepared when war came to annihilate herself.'

" ' It looks that way to me,' ses the whale. ' Is there anything else worth while going on in the world ? '

" ' There's the Irish question,' ses the grasshopper.

" ' Where's that, Ireland is ? ' ses the whale. ' Isn't that an island to the west of England ? '

" ' No,' ses the grasshopper, ' but England is an island to the east of Ireland.'

" ' Wisha,' ses the whale, ' it gives me indigestion to hear people talking about Ireland. Sure, I nearly swallowed it up be mistake while I was on a holiday in the Atlantic last year, an' I'm sorry now that I didn't.'

" ' An' I'm sorry that you didn't try,' ses the grasshopper. ' Then you'd know something about indigestion. The less you have to say about Ireland the less you'll have to be sorry for. Remember that me father came from Cork.'

" ' Can't I say what I like ? ' ses the whale.

" ' You can think what you like,' ses the grasshopper, ' but say what other people like if you want to be a good politician.'

" ' There's nothin' so much abused as politics,' ses the whale.

" ' Except politicians,' ses the grasshopper. ' Only for the Irish

they'd be no one bothering about poetry and the drama to-day. Only for fools they'd be no wise people an' only for sprats, hake, and mackerel there 'ud be no whales, an' a good job that would be, too.'

"' What's that you're saying ? ' ses the whale very sharply.

"' Don't have me to lose me temper with you,' ses the grasshopper.

"' Wisha, bad luck to your impudence an' bad manners, you insignificant little spalpeen. How dare you insult your superiors ? ' ses the whale.

"' Who's me superior ? ' ses the grasshopper. ' You, is it ? '

"' Yes, me then,' ses the whale.

"' Another word from you,' ses the whale, ' an' I'll put you where Napoleon put the oysters.'

"' Well,' ses the grasshopper, ' there's no doubt but vanity, ignorance, and ambition are three wonderful things, an' you have them all.'

"' Neither you, nor Napoleon, nor the Kaiser himself an' his hundred million men could do hurt or harm to me. You could have every soldier in the German Army, the French Army, an' the Salvation Army lookin' for me an' I'd put the comether on them all.'

"' I can't stand this any longer,' ses the whale, an' then and there he hits the rock a whack of his tail an' when I went to look for the grasshopper, there he was sitting on the whale's nose as happy an' contented as if nothing happened. An' when he jumped back to the rock again he says : ' A little exercise when 'tis tempered with discretion never does any harm, but violent exertion is a very foolish thing if you value your health. But it is only people who have no sinse but think they have it all who make such errors.'

"' If I could get a hold of you,' ses the whale, ' I'd knock some of the pride out of you.'

"' That would be an ungentlemanly way of displaying your displeasure,' ses the grasshopper.

"' I'd scorn,' ses he, ' to use violent means with you, or do you physical injury of any kind. All you want is self-control and a little education. You should know that quantity without quality isn't as good as quality without quantity.'

"' Sure 'tis I'm the fool to be wasting me time listening to the likes of you,' ses the whale. ' If any of me family saw me now, I'd never hear the end of it.'

" ' Indeed,' ses the grasshopper, ' no one belonging to me would ever recognize me ever again if they thought I was trying to make a whale behave himself. There would be some excuse for one of my attainments feeling proud. But as for you !——'

" ' An' what in the name of nonsense can you do except give old guff out of you ? '

" ' I haven't time to tell you all,' ses the grasshopper. ' But to commence with, I can travel all over the world an' have the use of trains, steamers, sailing ships and automobiles and will never be asked to pay a cent, an' I can live on dry land all me life if I choose, while you can't live under water, or over water, on land or on sea, and while all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't catch me if they were trying till the crack of doom, you could be caught be a few poor, harmless sailors, who wouldn't know a crow from a cormorant, and who'd sell your carcass to make oil for foolish wives to burn an' write letters to other people's husbands an' fill the world with trouble.'

" ' An' what about all the whalebone we supplies for ladies' corsets an' paper knives, and what about all the stories we make for the novelists an' the moving pictures an'——'

" We're at the Sprig of Holly now," said Felix. " Is it a pint of porter or a bottle you'll have ? "

" I'll have a pint, I think," said Standish.

FRANCIS BUZZELL
B. 1882

MA'S PRETTIES

BEN BROOKS filled his mouth with mashed potatoes, pushed the emptied plate to the centre of the table, and kicked his chair back. It was Saturday night and he made ready to go to Almont. He ran his fingers through his mat of yellowish-grey hair, dirt-seamed fingers of a farm-labourer, as he went for his coat and hat on the nail behind the door. He had no team of horses to harness, not even a worked-out mare and paint-bare buggy, such as the " renters " went to town in. That had all gone long ago when the land went. He was no longer even a steady farm-hand. All that was left him was the old house with its garden patch, and the barn, which now housed a few chickens.

His daughters, Aggie and Josie, clearing away the supper dishes, looked at each other.

" Pa, you ain't goin' without seein' Ma ! "

Ben grunted, and started up the stairs. His wife sat propped up in bed, muttering to herself. On the little table beside the bed, he saw the pie-tin on which Ma burned mullein-leaves, and the old tin funnel through which she inhaled the fumes when she felt an attack of asthma coming on. Ben shuffled in the doorway and rubbed the back of his hand against his unshaven face. It might go hard with Ma if she started to wheeze, now that she was so bad with her side.

" Is that you there, Ben ?—Get me the little jug—over the door —You be careful, now—It's cracked."

She tilted the jug upon the patch-quilt, a brown jug, with cat-tails painted on it. She had won it in a race at the Fair, when she was Sadie Chambers and " keeping company " with Ben Brooks. Her bony hands moved ; her fingers felt about. She picked up a twenty-five cent piece and three nickels. The effort tired her.

" Put the jug back—Careful, now—You take them forty cents an' get them earrings—They must be fixed by now—Ma died in 'em. I want to die in 'em."

" Don't be a fool, Ma! You ain't goin' to die. Didn't Doctor John say you was goin' to last longer'n me? "

" I'm a-breathin' awful heavy."

" Don't talk like that, Ma. We got to have you." Ben put his hand on his wife's thin shoulder. " You wait till I bring back them earrings of your'n, anyhow."

" Don't let that Sam talk you into spendin' any of them forty cents, now."

" Don't begin a-wheezin' while I'm gone."

His daughters followed him out on to the porch.

" Now, Pa. You come home early. You know Ma's sick."

Ben hurried down the path. It was a habit formed on the many Saturday nights when, because he took a glass, or at most two glasses, of beer, his wife's shrill " Don't you be a-gettin' drunk, now! " pursued him far down the road. But he did not turn around, when out of sight, to shake his fist in the direction of the house and exclaim, " You old fool! " Nor did he mutter, as he plodded on, " The old miser. Don't I know? Ain't I seen her a-hangin' of them old dresses of her'n out on the line so's the farmers' wives 'ud think she'd lots of things? She's cracked about her pretties! " He did not even whistle to himself.

He found Old Sam leaning against the watering-trough at Predmore's Corners, waiting for him. Like two old horses meeting in a strange pasture, they rubbed up against each other. This was their way of greeting every Saturday night. On the mile and a half to town they did not exchange a word.

On the hotel corner, Ben turned to Sam. " Got a dime? "

" No. Have you? "

" No."

" We'll get a dime or two," said Sam.

" Editor Tinsman might have a job he wants done," Ben suggested.

" Or Ed Snover, or Doc Greenshields," added Sam. " Marb Brab might have something."

" I got forty cents Ma gave me to get her earrings," Ben confided.

" Have ye? We'll get a dime or two, somehow."

The two old men waited on Newberry's Corner. Marb Brab came along.

" Good evening, boys."

" Howdy, Mr. Brab."

Marb Brab went on without offering them a job. Editor Tinsman

said " Hello ! " to them as he crossed the street to his office. Al Jersey came along. They stepped out in the middle of the sidewalk, scuffled a bit, and laughed loudly. But he had nothing for them.

" I'd better get Ma's earrings, 'fore it's too late."

" Better wait a bit."

" No, I'd better go."

" If you work it right, mebbe Tibbits will take just thirty cents."

" Catch Roy Tibbits a-doin' anything like that ! "

" Mebbe I'll get something while you're gone," Sam concluded.

Ben started up the street.

Charlie Wade, the photographer, passed Newberry's Corner, and Lawyer Moreland, and Ed Snover.

" Got anything ? " Ben asked, when he returned.

" Let's go an' look in the drug-store window," Sam suggested. " Mebbe Hepplethwaite 'll want us to turn the ice-cream freezer."

They walked up and down in front of the plate-glass window. Hepplethwaite didn't beckon to them. They heard the town clock strike ten—there was little chance of their earning anything.

Sam went through his pockets. " We ain't got nothin' we can borrow a dime or two on, have we ? "

" Ma's sick. She thinks a wonderful lot of them earrings. If it was next week, when Ma'd be better——"

" You might say you just forgot," Sam interrupted. " Next Saturday night we'd sure make some money an' get 'em back."

" Ma's sick. It's one of her pretties."

" Let's go home, then,' Sam' grumbled. " I'm tired of a-hangin' around here."

They started for home. Farmers drove past them. A wagon loaded with three generations of Jeddo's, good-natured, noisy, the laughter of the women and young girls sounding shrilly above the gruff voices of the men, clattered up from behind. " Hello, Ben ! Hello, Sam ! Want a ride ? Tumble in, boys ! Tumble in ! Lots of room ! "

The two old men shook their heads and tramped on. Ben did not brag of the exploits that ended when he married Sadie Chambers ; nor did Old Sam talk of the Saturday nights when he, and not his red-headed son, was hired man of the Predmore Farm. They reached Predmore's Corners. " Good-night, Sam ! "

" 'Night ! "

"I got them earrings, anyhow," Ben prided himself, as he went along the stretch of road. "An' I ain't had a drink. Won't Ma be surprised!"

Aggie and Josie came to the door when they heard Ben's step. "Pa! Oh, Pa!" they called to him. "Ma's dead!"

"Now, now, Josie! Don't say that! She ain't, Aggie! She ain't, Josie! Say she ain't dead!"

Mrs. Lowell was the first of the neighbours to come in the next day. She brewed strong tea for Ben and looked after the girls:

"Now you run upstairs, Josie, an' you, Aggie, an' get fixed. People will begin a-comin' soon. An' you, Ben, go put on that black coat of yourn."

Ben wandered from room to room. His daughters watched him. He wiped the face of the Swiss clock with his sleeve. He found the World's Fair souvenir spoon in the china-closet, picked it up and put it down again. He took the silver-handled cane that Uncle George had brought with him from the city, and carried it about.

Aggie turned to Josie. "See, he's already a-takin' of Ma's pretties."

"He'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

"Ma loved Grandma Chambers's earrings, didn't she, Aggie?"

"Yes, Josie. An' the jet beads with the locket on 'em. An' the Swiss clock."

"An' the silver pitcher-frame."

"An' Uncle George's cane with the silver end."

"Ma loved her pretties."

"Pa'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

They began to cry.

"We don't care for ourselves," Aggie appealed to Mrs. Lowell. "It's you ought to get something nice. You've always been so good to Ma."

"Yes, one of the nicest," said Josie. "It'd be such a comfort to Ma to know you got the best. Pa'll sell 'em all for drink, now Ma's gone."

Ben took Grandma Chambers's earrings into the parlour where Ma was lying in her coffin. "She didn't know, she didn't know I brought 'em home. Here they be, Ma! Here they be. See, on the coffin!"

Ben was moved by the appearance of the parlour, by the silence,

by the heavy odour, that oppressive odour present at funerals, in rooms where windows and shutters are seldom opened. Mrs. Lowell had made everything beautiful for Ma's last day at home. She had brought all the best flowers from her garden and disposed of them about the room. Ben saw the white asters which Mrs. Lowell had piled upon Ma's rocker and set at the head of the coffin; the "store flowers" brought by Undertaker Hopkins that she had placed upon the coffin-lid; the pitcher of cosmos beside the family Bible on the little stand in the window; the zinnias on the marble-topped table in the corner; the dahlias on the window-sills; the stray asters and cornflowers pinned to the curtains; the sweet alyssum twined around the picture wire of Ma's daguerreotype—Mrs. Lowell had always been good to Ma.

Mrs. Lowell had brought chicken-broth and tidied up Ma's room whenever Ma was sick. She had been a great help to Ma when Uncle George came home to die. Now Ma lay in her coffin, white, with her hands folded over her breast. Ma would have a fine funeral. Mrs. Lowell had seen to everything.

His daughters were not like Mrs. Lowell. They didn't know how to make a room look pretty. Ben had hoped that Aggie and Josie would turn out differently, when they had been too young instead of too old to be married, and Ma had gone about the house singing. Now Ma was gone, and left all her pretties behind.

"Aggie! Josie!" Ben called to his daughters. "Ma loved her pretties. You can have 'em all. You divide 'em, I can't."

Aggie and Josie looked at each other. The pretties were theirs! What had got into Pa?

"Mis' Lowell ought to get one," added Ben. "She's always been so good to Ma. The beads an' locket, she might like that?"

"Now, Pa, you better go into the dinin'-room an' lay down. You're so tired."

"Mis' Lowell's always been good to Ma," Ben repeated.

"You're so tired, Pa. Go lay down on the lounge."

They watched him shuffle out of the room, and waited until they heard the springs of the lounge creak under his weight. They knew there were pretties in Ma's bureau that Pa had forgotten about. They started up the stairs, treading carefully, and keeping close together. They reached Ma's door. Aggie turned the door-knob with both hands and stepped softly into the room, with Josie close behind her.

They left the door open so that they might hear Pa better. They opened the closet door, hesitated, looked in. There was Ma's bureau. They tried the two top drawers. They were locked.

"The keys, Josie! Where be the keys?"

"Ma kept 'em rolled up in a stockin'."

"We'll find 'em."

They opened the next drawer, filled with Ma's "best" clothes—the Paisley shawl, Ma's "best" silk dress, the dress of Henrietta cloth, the cashmere dress, Ma's "best" muslin dress, and the red flannel skirt edged with lace knit out of red yarn.

Both pulled at the third drawer. It flew open. Balls of yarn—pink, green, red, yellow, blue, of various sizes, left over from many quiltings, rolled out upon the floor. They felt about for rolled-up stockings, in the cotton-batting, under the piles of aprons, between the folds of babies' clothing.

"Them be ours, Aggie."

"Where be them stockin's?"

They opened the fourth drawer. Their hands threshed about, ran into each other, tumbled the contents. They straightened up and looked at the shelves.

"They wouldn't be in them boxes, would they, Josie?"

"The basket! Let's try that."

They took down the large, clean, basswood market-basket. Josie lifted the hinged cover. They found Ma's white wool "fascinator" hood, a pair of woollen leggings, Ma's "best" knit slippers, a thick brown veil, and a pair of black woollen mittens.

"Here be the stockin's."

They upset the basket. In a rolled-up pair of grey woollen stockings Josie found the keys.

"Give 'em to me. Go an' look, Josie. Pa may be a-comin'."

"No, we'd hear 'im. Open the drawer, Aggie, the right-hand one."

They saw the lacquer box and the red leather purse that Uncle George had brought Ma from the city. Aggie took the purse. Ma used to keep her money in it. But it was empty. The lacquer box held Grandma Chambers's things. They lifted out carefully the shawl of Spanish lace, a small Bible with a gold clasp, six worn silver spoons, a coral cameo breast-pin, a piece of thin gold chain, and Grandma Chambers's jet beads with the locket.

" The idea of Pa's wantin' to give away Grandma Chambers's beads an' locket," said Aggie. " The idea ! "

" It's just like Pa. He ain't to be trusted."

" Now that locket, that locket 'ud look right smart on you, Josie. Ma'd be glad you had it, I know. An' Ma'd like me to have Grandma Chambers's earrings."

" You'll own three spoons, Aggie, an' I'll own the other three. Mebbe the lace shawl 'ud look best on me ? "

" I'll have the Bible, an' you can have the cameo pin. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

The upper left-hand drawer was filled with many small pasteboard boxes, one on top of the other. One of them held Ma's " best " switch —grey, like her own hair—with the side-comb and bone hairpins in place. They took out the comb and pins. In a little box within a box they found an old needle-book that had belonged to Ma's grandmother. From another box they took a black switch, worn before Ma's hair turned. Josie thought it might come in handy. In other boxes were several pairs of Ma's " specs," which she had put away as she needed stronger ones ; Ma's under plate of false teeth, which she had never used ; a lock of some one's hair ; several gold-plated breast-pins in the form of flowers ; and a round locket that looked like a watch, with pictures of Pa and of Ma, taken on their wedding day.

" You take the breast-pins, an' I'll have the round locket. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

They looked around Ma's room. Pa's bureau did not interest them. They took down the jug from the shelf over the door. Its contents rattled. They upset the jug upon the patch-quilt, and divided fifty cents between them. Then they went downstairs.

" The cane, Josie, you take that, an' I'll have the spoon from the World's Fair. Ma was proud of Uncle George, wasn't she, Josie ? She'd want us to keep the cane, an' the silk hat in the grand leather case, an' the white gloves, an' the box with the cigars in it."

They went into the parlour, where Ma lay in her coffin.

" Them earrings are mine, now, ain't they, Josie ? You got the beads an' locket. We'll find something for Mis' Lowell."

Ben heard them. " Hadn't I better take the pretty over to Mis' Lowell ? She's always been so good to Ma."

Aggie and Josie looked at their father and at each other.

" Yes, Pa. We'll get it."

They went back into Ma's room. They looked around, at the top of the bureau, at the shelf over the door. They opened the door of Ma's closet, and closed it again. They saw the jug where they had left it on the patch-quilt.

"Ma wouldn't want us to give away that patch-quilt of her'n, would she, Josie?"

"No, Aggie. That'll be good on our bed, cold nights. We'll give Pa the brown one. It'll be warmer."

Aggie took a ball of string, wound smooth and hard—pink and green string from the drug-store—tied end to end, and Ma's jack-knife from the pocket hanging on the closet door.

"You get a sheet of paper, Josie, from the bottom of one of them drawers."

They wrapped up the jug carefully, and went downstairs.

"Here it is, Pa. We did it up nice. Be careful now, an' don't you undo it."

Ben was pleased. It looked like a Christmas present. Mrs. Lowell had always been good to Ma. He took the South road to the Lowell farm. He saw a woman near the red barn. He felt of the parcel, turned it about. His fingers followed the outlines. He wanted to undo it, but he was afraid he would not be able to do it up so nice. The woman in the barnyard was Mrs. Lowell, feeding her chickens.

Ben worked open a corner of the paper, and inserted his finger, without disturbing the string.

"Mis' Lowell should 'a' had something nicer. It ain't good enough to be given for Ma."

He started back for home. "I ain't goin' to take that jug to her."

He took a few steps, then straightened up and turned about. His heart beat fast; there was a light in his eyes. He was young again, one of a big crowd, watching the girls' race at the Fair. His Sadie was leading them all. Everybody cheered for her. She ran right into his arms, and they gave her the first prize—the very jug he had in his hands.

He took the jug out of its wrappings, and hurried across the farmyard to Mrs. Lowell.

"I'm a-bringin' you one of Ma's pretties——this here little jug with the cat-tail paintin' on it——she won it at the Fair. She was Sadie Chambers then, an' she beat all the other girls, an'—— Oh, you ought'er seen how she ran!"

ADDISON LEWIS
B. 1889

WHEN DID YOU WRITE YOUR MOTHER LAST?

COLLINS was a bum. He roamed about the country on foot or abaft the rods of a wind-jamming freight car, summer and winter, a restless spirit whose sole desire was to get food enough to keep him alive and beer as often as possible. He never stayed in one place long enough for people to inquire why he hadn't a regular job—because engraven on his soul was a solemn pledge: "Never Work." If he had ever condescended to do a little manual labour, no matter how spasmodic, he would have elevated himself to the status of a tramp. A tramp will work, if there is no other way out. But a bum—never. He will sooner throw himself under a Mogul engine, and sue the railroad company for damages.

The lowest, the most good-for-nothing among us, say the psychologists, have some capability, some potential power, to do a certain thing better than the average of our fellows. Collins could hold the attention of a camp-fire gathering of twenty derelicts for hours at a time with his yarning. He was known as the best yarn spinner among the disorganized cohorts of Coxie's army from the Battery to the Golden Gate. They called him affectionately "The Ace-high Liar." His yarns, he swore, were honest experiences from his own life, but as a matter of fact, as all his pals knew, they were seventy-five per cent Collins' purple imagination. But they listened to him, and so passed many an hour otherwise weary and profitless. He could take them with him over the broad, cracked face of the earth. He could make them believe they were Alaskan gold hunters, explorers in the Uganda, English tars, seal hunters in the Bering Sea, plantation proprietors in Hawaii, Mexican arms smugglers—anything that came into his round red head.

In another stratum Collins might have been a successful writer of "red-blooded" fiction or thrilling scenarios for the movies. He had been the hero of a thousand unfilmed reels. He was a Lafcadio Hearn for description, a Jack London of narrative, a veritable Dickens for pathos. Nor is this saying much. Most every man has

known some unheralded genius like Collins, blissfully ignorant of his own possibilities and therefore three times blessed.

One raw night toward the end of November, Collins and a pal were hugging a radiator in the lobby of the Salvation Army hotel in Minneapolis. Why they happened to be there I don't know. Where they had come from, I don't know. But they were there. And it was good to feel the hot pipes pressed against their shivering bodies. They were cold and hungry and miserable; the joy of life had fled from their souls. Under their breath they cursed each other, God and the weather. The other occupants of the room were peacefully reading or pretending to read. But Collins and his companion were in no mood for reading. Their seared, yellow eyes roamed about the room. They craved whisky, raw whisky. It would ease their troubles and give them a temporary feeling of well-being. But they were flat broke, they couldn't borrow, and the days of begging had been fruitless. Their eyes continued to roam squintingly, maliciously. They hated the fatuous air of comfort exhaled by the rest of the room.

"Hell!" muttered Collins.

His pal did not answer. Collins turned to look at him. A single tear was trickling down his unshaven cheek. He was a young man almost half Collins' age. His gaze was fixed on the opposite wall, and Collins, following its direction, encountered a placard in large letters: "When Did You Write Your Mother Last?"

"Got the homesick bug, eh?" The other furtively drew his hand across his cheek. "Forget it!" he said hoarsely.

"I don't blame ya, after what we've had handed us the last two days." There was rough kindness in Collins' tone.

"Forget it!" repeated the kid. After a moment he added sullenly, "Guess I'll read. Nothin' else for a guy to do in this damned hole." He shuffled over to a table and sat down.

Collins hugged the radiator several minutes longer. Then he turned up his coat collar and left the room. He had decided to make another try at pan-handling the price of a drink.

When he came back his pal was hunched over the table with a pencil and a scrawled sheet of paper. Collins sat down opposite. A genial glow tingled inside him. His errand had been successful.

"Obeyin' orders?" he asked jovially, raising an eyebrow toward the placard. The kid ignored him. He was writing feverishly. Collins sat still, regarding the placard with half-shut, musing eyes. "'When Did You Write Your Mother Last?'" he murmured. His

lips twisted in a bitter smile. He put his arms on the table and pillowed his head on them. The stillness of the room was broken by three soft sounds—the click of the battered clock on the wall, the heavy breathing of the readers, and the tap, tap of the kid's pencil on the paper. Five minutes passed. Collins felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. " You can't sleep here," said the room clerk.

" Eh ? " said Collins, " I wasn't asleep."

The clerk started back to his desk. Collins got to his feet and followed him. " How much for paper and an envelope ? "

" Two cents."

Collins produced the coins. He went back to the table and sat down. After an infinite search he brought forth a stump of a pencil from somewhere in the depths of his being. He began to write. Slowly, haltingly with a prodigious effort the words came. His copious speaking vocabulary, adapted to the demands of a hundred varying tales of his roving life, suddenly seemed to have vanished before the task of composing a simple letter. It was years since he had written anything but his name. But gradually, slowly, the page began to fill with crazily-fashioned words looking like so many hen tracks. After a time, Collins glancing up found the kid's eyes on him.

" Who the hell you writin' to ? "

" Who the hell's askin' ? "

Deliberately the kid leaned over and read the superscription—" Dearest Mother." Collins jerked the letter away. " If you weren't my pal, I'd bean you for that."

The kid was shaking with silent laughter. " Writin' to your maw ! Forget it. Yer dippy."

" Who're you writin' to ? "

" What's it to yuh ? "

" Don't kid me, cully. You're writin' to yourn. There ain't no law 'gainst my doin the same."

" Forget it ! " said the kid. " You never had no maw. Tole me yerself you was brung up in an orphan pen."

Collins failed to answer. He was suddenly busy with his writing. It was true, Collins had never known a mother. But that fact had never bothered him and it did not bother now. For his fervid imagination was aglow visualizing a perfect mother—*his* mother, to whom he was pouring out his heart in a badly scrawled letter—abasing himself before her love, which he was sure had followed him over his long, starved years of wandering ; castigating himself in the light

of her certain forgiveness. He blessed her in words, wrung from the depths of his soul, that he had never revealed to any man; begged her still to cherish her faith, that he knew had many times been sorely tried, for soon he was coming home. Home—to her.

The kid had long ago finished his letter and gone to his bunk, when Collins wrote: "Affecshunitly, your son" and tucked the letter away in his coat.

. . . . . .

It was only a few days later that Collins, attempting to jump the bumpers of a moving freight, missed his footing on the ice-sheathed metal and fell. He was badly crushed and died before he was found. There was no one to mourn him. The kid and he had since quarrelled and parted company. But he earned a front-page story the next day in a great metropolitan daily. A shrewd reporter had come into possession of his precious letter, and it appeared in full, verbatim, under the title "Tramp Dies with Unmailed Letter to Mother." And many eyes in the great city blinked for a moment with suspicious moisture when they read. And several wanderers on the face of the earth recalled with a start the long time it had been since they had written their mothers.

Some of these, with the story still before them, half unconsciously reached for their cheque-books. And that evening before the type metal which had stamped the story on their awakened memories had been melted to be shaped again into the next day's murder, grand ball, or clothing advertisement, a little fund had been raised to save what remained of Collins from the Potters' Field.

So it came to pass on the following afternoon, a forlorn little undertaking "parlour" was made sadly gay with flowers from nameless givers, while "Spieler" Hanks, the leathern-lunged street-evangelist, said a few words above Collins' coffin in a voice strangely modulated.

When the kid many miles down the line read the account of this unusual occasion in a tattered, battered, week-old edition, borrowed from a brakie, he drew his hand across his tobacco-stained mouth and grunted in amazement.

"For de love o' Mike! Dat guy couldn't quit kiddin' even when he croaked. A whole town full o' weepin' nuts is just fallin' all over demselves paying respects to dat good-for-nothin' old hobo. Oh, Collins? Oh, boy!"

And he slapped his leg and went off into a paroxysm of laughter.

FREDERICK BOOTH

SUPERS

WANTED: Tall, good-looking men for the stage. Must be well dressed. Apply at stage door of —— Theatre at ten A.M.

THERE is a certain amount of irony in the above, such as, for instance, "Tall, good-looking"; "must be well dressed"; and the man who appears in the side street in the vicinity of the stage door at about half-past nine in the morning knows this, for he wrote the advertisement himself.

He is a thick man, with a red beard trimmed in the form of a blunt wedge, and cut away from around his mouth as a hedge is cut from a gate. He is a man with a cool green eye, immobile face, and distant manner. A man who walks slowly, is introspective, gloomy; who carries a big stick like Javert's cudgel and studies the pavement like a man of large affairs. He has the manner of a general waiting to review his army, which he expects to find decimated and run down at the heel. He wears a derby hat slightly broken at the crown, a little shiny on the edges; an overcoat with a collar somewhat frayed; boots that are rather square-toed and vulgar.

This combination of shabbiness and thoughtfulness lends him an appearance of sorrow—simple and primitive in the light of his red beard—as if he were telling himself and would like to tell the world: Here is a man of immense capabilities, fated to deal in small and absolutely rotten potatoes.

In twos and threes some men begin to come in sight from the direction of Sixth and Seventh Avenues. They sidle into the street that runs by the stage door; some of them cast at Red Beard a look of recognition and a half-nod, to which he is profoundly indifferent. Others fix their gaze upon the legend over the door as children stare at the entrance of a circus tent.

Little by little the straggling and deliberate comers make a scattered crowd. The catchings of the advertisement agglomerate and blacken the middle of the street.

They stand stock-still. As a concourse of men they are, all in all, voiceless and apathetic; before the momentary flurry of some traffic in the street they are brushed aside as dry leaves. There is a shuffling of feet on the asphalt as of dry leaves hurried along by the wind.

There seems to be an understanding among these men, as if this were not their first venture in such an enterprise. And there seems to be an understanding between them and the man with the cane: he appears, by the casual oblique glance, by the turned shoulder, to know them, where they came from, what he can do with them; and to feel the indifference of the dealer for his stock-in-trade. He wrote the ad. Here are the men. It is the same as ordering coal and seeing it dumped upon the sidewalk.

The scattered crowd had become a mob, a quiet mob that pushes gently, elbows itself without offence, waits.

Tall? Well-dressed? There are tall men, but their heads move in a sea of men that are short, men that are stooped. There may be well-dressed men, but they are hidden among men with shabby clothes. They are of all ages, but of the same condition. There may be seen grey heads, like patches of white wool in a flock of black sheep.

From a distance this small mass of humanity, held in abeyance by a single purpose, appears to be wholly silent, its attention, if not its glance, controlled by the simple potency of the stage door; but coming closer one may hear sounds that are words gutturally spoken, and a desultory murmur that resolves itself into a dialogue of many parts. Is there any stratum of society that does not have its shop talk? In every one, its atoms, akin, are stretching back and forth those little tentacles of question and answer, of seeking to know, of seeking to tell, that hold them together.

"Wher' wus you last week?"

"T' Newark wit' Mantell."

"Any good?"

"Nix. Rotten. One night y' play an' th' next y' don't an' y' gotta . . ."

"How many do they want here?"

"I dunno, it's a rotten bizness; not'ing in this bizness no more. I'm goin' t'. . ."

"Hey, y' rummy, git offa my foot. Whaddaya t'ink I yam?"

A sinister sort of meekness controls these men; holds men patient who are hard of face; docile who seem to be cut for any sort of

business; pathetically anxious who seem to be cast for any rough hazard.

These are the men who may be seen on park benches; at saloon corners; who accost passers in the name of charity; who carry restaurant signs; who may be seen every morning at newspaper offices eagerly scanning the want columns; who carry a newspaper as if it were something precious; who hurry along with a sidelong gait; whose shoes make a sliding noise on the pavement.

These are men unshaven of face, pallid of complexion. Some of them wear overcoats turned up at the collar, sagging at the skirt with a rag-tag of frayed lining showing; bulging at the pocket with some unimaginable personal freight. Some of them wear no overcoats, some no vests, others no collars. Some, with short, shrunken trousers, show bare red ankles. There are trousers that have settled into fixed folds about the shoes as if they had not been doffed or pulled up for some nights. The feet point out at a loutish angle, or point in pigeon-wise. There are flat feet, feet broken at the instep, spread out like a duck's—oozing damp, hideous and evidently filthy, stub-ended, low in the instep, too large. They shift, shuffle, and twist about like wounded and helpless members. The hands that go with them are red and dirty; they are rubbed against trousers impotently, for want of something better to do. These men stand with their necks habitually drawn into their collars, their shoulders hunched. They have an unhealthy colour and they speak in voices coarsened by whisky and by the weather. They crane at the door like beggars waiting for a hand-out.

It is ten o'clock. Red Beard has forsaken the sidewalk and is standing on a box or something at the stage door, looking at the findings of his advertisement. He scowls heavily and appears to be disgusted with what he sees.

The crowd edges closer. Those on the outside push those within. The crowd becomes a pack. Necks crane upward. A hoarse voice meant to be jocular wheezes:

"Hey, bo, y' want me, don't y's? Ain't I t' cheese?"

A laugh swells up, but dies instantly before the sardonic sneer under Red Beard's hedge. Some one says: "Huh, wot 'd'yu's t'ink you are, a primy donny star?"

Red Beard's jaw moves and he is heard to mutter:

"Gawd, what a rotten bunch!"

A uniform pushing and shoving begins. A clownish, uncouth eagerness manifests itself and animates the crowd. It is as if they were scrambling for apples. The scuffling of feet sounds like an unrhythmic dance. On the outside gaunt, bent legs push to get in. On the inside, in the middle of the jam, scrawny necks stretch up, heads stare.

A hoarse clacking murmur, resembling more than anything else the quacking of geese going to water, is evidence of a certain sort of talk going on within the confines of the crowd. It runs in a monotone and reveals no anger, no impatience, none of the mob frenzy that might be expected here. A futile eagerness!

Already the man on the box has begun to exercise his authority. He holds in his hand a card which he consults with knitted brows, and from which his glance shoots quickly, like an accusation, at the men. He points at one man in the thick of the press.

"You there," he says, "you wop wit' t' dent in your nose, I want youse."

As the lucky one shoves forward the crowd is forced apart as logs are pried apart by a canthook.

"Youse guys stand back," bawls Red Beard. The stage door is opened by some one whose face shows through the dirty glass and the first super fights his way within.

Red Beard's club-like finger is periodically brandished at the pack; his voice of brass names some candidate by any ill-favoured mark he can see, and that one is cut out as a steer is cut out of the herd.

It seems that some definite programme is being followed: some planned chiaroscuro of the stage is being sketched in: broad shoulders and tall frames are at a premium, but shrunk figures, hairy faces and loutish manners are nailed by the Captain of this peculiar industry; old men with long beards have their innings.

The crowd imperceptibly draws together at the edges as the middle is gutted and the ill-hued flowers of the flock are plucked.

At last some at the outside begin to straggle from the press. They light cigarettes which hang like appendages from their lips; some of them whistle; some dance a tentative hop. Thus they make light of their bootless quest "for a job."

Suddenly the man on the box waves his hand and says: "That's all; youse guys come back here tomorry morning," hops from his perch and disappears within the theatre.

The largest number of those who came are still on the street. Collectively they present the appearance of a dog licking his chops after some morsel snatched away. They gape at the door closed in their faces as if some one had gone inside with something that belonged to them.

There is some hesitation, some loafing about, then a policeman bears down and waves his club. The black knot untangles itself, tailing out into a long string that drags its length in two directions, towards the two avenues, thins more, parts in the middle and disappears. No face shows more than passing disappointment—little has been lost. Some whistle, others call to each other, empty phrases are bandied about by tongues that have lost the gift of tongues.

The scuffling of their feet more or less in unison sounds like a rope dragging.

FRANCES GREGG

WHOSE DOG—?

"HEY—there's ladies here, move on—you!" The tone was authoritative, and old John, the village drunkard, crouched away.

"I warn't doin' nothin'," he clutched feebly at the loose hanging rags that clothed him, "only wanted to see same 's them. Guess this pier's big enough to hold us all."

"Halloo, John, have a drink?" A grinning boy held a can of salt water toward him.

The quick maudlin tears sprang to the old man's eyes. "Little fellers," he muttered, "little fellers, they oughtn't ter act that way."

"Give him a new necktie; he's gotta go to dinner with the Lodge." A handful of dank sea-weed writhed around the old man's neck. "That's a turtle, that is," the boy went on, the need for imparting information justifying his lapse from ragging the drunkard. "There—swimming round—it's tied to that stake. You orter've seen it at low tide when it was on the beach. It weighs ninety pounds."

"I seen a turtle onct," the drunkard quavered. "It was bigger'n that. En they tied it to a stake—en it swam round—en it swam round——." His sodden brain clutched for something more to say, some marvel with which to hold the interest of the gathered boys. It was good to talk. If only they would let him talk to them. If only they would let him sit on the store porch and smoke and gossip. He wouldn't be the town disgrace——

"Well—go on—what 'd 't do?"

"Hey you!"—the boys were interrupted by the authoritative voice—"I told you to move on, didn't I—now if I tell you again I'll run you in. D' yer hear? What you boys let that old bum hang around you for anyway? What's he doin' here?"

"Aw, he's fun. He warn't doin' nothin'. He was just awatchin' it swim. It's tied to that post. It don't come up no more."

"Watchin' it swim, eh, was he? A'right. Whose dog is it?" The officer turned and sauntered away.

Sudden horror seized the old man. The liquor seemed drained

out of his veins: his brain worked almost quickly. "Whose dog—whose dog? Say!" he darted after the retreating boys. "Say—that ain't no dog—is it—no *dog*? Tied up like that to drown—say——"

"Aw—keep off—I told you onct—it's a turtle for the Lodge dinner." The boy shook himself free.

The old man stood a moment, shaken. His pulpy brain worked dimly toward the conception of the pain that was consuming him. "Whose dog——" that man had asked—and he hadn't meant to help it—"whose dog?" They could do it—tie up a dog to drown in sight of people—like that—cruel. He saw the policeman coming toward him again. In a sudden frenzy he clutched his tattered garments about him and began to run, to run toward the end of the pier.

The boys raced after him. "What yer gonter do?" they shouted. "What yer gonter do?"

The old man turned and looked at them a moment with twitching features. "I'm gonter die," he said.

"Come on, you fellers—come on—the drunk's gonter dive—come on—he's cryin'!"

There was a splash. A surge of green filth and mud spread and dyed the water. A row of expectant heads leaned over the rail. "Say—he ain't come up." They waited.

The policeman strolled leisurely down in response to their repeated cries. "*Who* ain't come up? What, him—the drunk?" The officer leaned lethargically over the rail. "What'm I gonter do? Why, leave 'm. He ain't got no folks gonter sit up nights waitin' fer 'm. Now, you young ones, go along home to your suppers," he indulgently commanded, "and you little fellers, if you want crabs, be 'round here early. By to-morrow this place will be fairly swarmin' with them."

GUSTAV KOBBÉ
B. 1857

CLOTHES

"MRS. GRAVES at home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Any one with her?"

"Mr. Benton, sir. They're upstairs in the library, sir."

"Did Mr. Benton's brokers call up from the city?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did they get him?"

"No, sir. He sent word from upstairs there was no hurry—he would call up the office later himself."

"Put some Scotch and carbonic on the table, and let Mrs. Graves know I'm here."

He went into the drawing-room. With a critical eye he regarded a tapestry panel over the door. Placing himself in a good position for light, he surveyed the paintings on the wall. Then he furrowed the rug with the point of his shoe, and watched the play of colour in the soft, deep pile.

He passed into the dining-room. The butler had put the Scotch and carbonic and a silver bowl with cracked ice on the table. But Graves first looked around here, as he had in the drawing-room. The panelling was English oak, intact from an Elizabethan mansion in one of the shires, with furniture and everything complete. The bowl and the rest of the silver on the serving table were of the same period. The room, like the one from which he had come, was in admirable taste.

He was very deliberate. Pouring out his Scotch, he added a squirt from the siphon, and listened to the tinkle of the ice as it floated against the sides of the thin glass, before he drank. Through the large, oblong window, with its heavy yet clear pane, he saw his garage and, in front of it, the handsome limousine, in which he had just driven up from the station. The lawn, with its flower-beds and trees, made a fine expanse, as it sloped down to the river, where his yacht lay at his private landing.

Pausing again at the drawing-room, for a final and apparently

satisfied look at the apartment, he stepped into the hall and took the lift upstairs.

"How's Archie Graves—'the coming man of Wall Street'?" asked Benton, with the supercilious drawl that was one of the things Graves hated about him.

No two men could have offered a sharper contrast to each other than Graves and the man who was dawdling about his wife. Benton was spare, tall and rather languid-looking, an impression confirmed by his fair, longish hair, blue eyes, and weak mouth; whereas from every line of Graves' strongly marked features, as well as from his vigorous frame, spoke the determination of the man who goes ahead and doesn't bother about complications till he's gotten what he wants.

"Well?" he asked in a comprehensive way that included them both, yet ignored Benton's effort.

"We've been up the river in the yacht," said his wife. "After luncheon on the island we shot at a target. I hit it twice!"

"I thought you hated shooting. You always said you were afraid of the noise."

"Arthur—Mr. Benton, I mean—has a pistol with a silencer attachment. It's fine! You'd never know there was shooting going on. It isn't any louder than the snap of a whip."

"Yes," said Graves with a dry laugh, "that's it—the snap of a whip! You can blow out your own brains, or some one else's, without being heard."

Benton looked up.

"I've never known you to talk like that, Graves."

"Oh. I've had a strenuous day. By the way, haven't you had any word from your brokers?"

"I'd forgotten all about it," drawled Benton. "Chalmers called up. I was reading poetry to Mrs. Graves. Meant to get Chalmers on the 'phone when I'd finished. It went clean out of my mind."

"Better get him right away. There's been something like a panic in the street—a break in a whole lot of stocks."

Benton rose rather reluctantly.

"I had the usual margin with Chalmers. What's the use of a broker if he can't look after your business without bothering you?"

He said this petulantly, as he left the room.

"I hope nothing has happened to his 'Silencer' stock," said the

woman. "He's awfully proud of his invention. Says England wants it for the army. He's going to give you a look-in on it."

"His invention?" Graves said this with a sneer. "He must have gotten that out of the poetry-book he's been reading to you. His father bought the 'Silencer' patent from the inventor and organised the company."

"Well, you know I don't understand anything about business," she said in rather a bored tone.

"Perhaps you can understand, when I tell you that I've come home worth half again as many millions as I was when I said good-bye to you this morning."

There was nothing bored about her expression now. She was thinking of how much more money he would give her to spend on herself, and that made her look softer and prettier than ever. She smiled as she looked up at him.

"I thought that would fetch you," he said.

"You're a wonder, Archie. How did you do it?"

"Broke the market on 'Silencer.' Watched it tumble till it dropped far enough to suit me. Then grabbed up the whole lot—mine and his. While he was reading poetry to you, I was wiping up the street with him. Couldn't go to the 'phone, eh? He's there now all right, hearing that he hasn't a dollar to his name, and to whom he's indebted for his haircut."

She didn't seem to grasp the full meaning of what he said. She was still smiling up at him, and looking her prettiest, when, from the hall below, there came a sound that resembled nothing so much as the snap of a whip.

The smile vanished. Her expression was that of a person who does not yet grasp the full significance of a sudden thing that has happened. She started to rise. Her husband closed the door and turned toward her.

"You can't go downstairs," he said. "In a few moments the hall will be full of servants. A scene before them would be fatal."

In a dull, hopeless way she pulled at a tassel that hung from an arm of the chair.

"The butler," he continued, "being English, and the best-trained specimen of his kind that has come under my observation, will be here shortly to tell me, quietly, what has happened. I'll step out into the

hall, so that you won't have to hear any disagreeable details, if there are any."

When he came back, she was crying softly. He pretended not to notice it.

"Before I left town this afternoon the Duveens called up. I suppose they'd already heard of the killing I'd made on the street. (Wonderful how they keep track of things, isn't it?) Anyhow, they wanted to tell me that the war has thrown the Thorpe Manor tapestries on the market, and there is a Reynolds they want me to see. The tapestries will go perfectly with everything in the drawing-room, and we really need an English old master over the dining-room mantel. Some day next week we'll go in to see the picture and talk over the tapestries. After that, you might as well get your clothes for the summer—*carte blanche*—anything and everything you want."

The little hand, so delicate, so slender, that he held in his, while with his other he stroked her hair, still trembled. Every now and then her tears came in a flood, but he could feel that she was gradually quieting down.

"Couldn't I—get the—clothes—sooner?"

She still spoke between sobs. But when he said, "Sure, little girl," he felt her creeping into his arms to be petted.

NEWBOLD NOYES

THE END OF THE PATH

SET far back in the hills that have thrown their wall of misty purple about the laughing blue of Lake Como, on a sheer cliff three thousand feet above the lake, stands a little weather-stained church. Beneath it lie the two villages of Cadenabbia and Menaggio; behind and up are rank on rank of shadowy mountains, sharply outlined against the sky—the foothills leading back to the giant Alps.

The last tiny cream-coloured house of the villages stands a full two miles this side of the tortuous path that winds up the face of the chrome-coloured cliff. Once a year, in a creeping procession of black and white, the natives make a pilgrimage to the little church to pray for rain in the dry season. Otherwise it is rarely visited.

Blagden climbed slowly up the narrow path that stretched like a clean white ribbon from the little group of pastel-coloured houses by the water. There was not a breath of wind, not a rustle in the grey-green olive trees that shimmered silver in the sunlight. Little lizards, sunning themselves on warm flat stones, watched him with brilliant eyes, and darted away to safety as he moved. The shadows of the cypress trees barred the white path like rungs of a ladder. And Blagden, drinking deep of the beauty of it all, climbed upward.

When he opened the low door of the little chapel the cold of the darkness within was as another barrier. He stepped inside, his footsteps echoing heavily through the shadows, though he walked on tiptoe. After the brilliant sunlight outside he could make out but little of the interior at first. At the far end four candles were burning, and he made his way toward them across the worn floor.

In a cheap, tarnished frame of gilt, above the four flickering pencils of light, hung a picture of the Virgin. Blagden stared at it in amazement. It had evidently been painted by a master hand. Blagden was no artist; but the face told him that. It was drawn with wonderful appreciation of the woman's sweetness. Perhaps the eyes were what was most wonderful—pitiful, trusting, a little sad perhaps.

The life-sized figure, draped in smoke-coloured blue, blended softly with the dusky shadows, and the flickering candlelight lent a witchery to blurred outlines that half deceived him—at moments the picture seemed alive. She was smiling a little wistful smile.

And the canvas over the heart of the Virgin was cut in a long, clean stroke—and opened in a disfiguring gash. Beneath it, on a little stand, lay a slim-bladed, vicious knife, covered with dust.

Blagden wonderingly stooped to pick it up—and a voice spoke out of the darkness behind him.

"I would not touch it, Signor," it said, and Blagden wheeled guiltily.

A man was standing in the shadow, almost at his elbow.

He was old, the oldest man Blagden had ever seen, and he wore the long brown gown of a monk. His face was like a withered leaf, lined and yellow, and his hair was silver white.

Only the small, saurian eyes held Blagden with their strange brilliance. The rest of his face was like a death mask.

"Why not?" said Blagden.

The monk stepped forward into the dim light, crossing himself as he passed the picture. He looked hesitatingly at the younger man before him, searching his face with his wonderfully piercing eyes. He seemed to find there what he was searching for, and when he spoke Blagden wondered at the gentleness of his voice.

"There is a story. Would the Signor care to hear?"

Blagden nodded, and the two moved back in the shadows a short distance to the front line of little low chairs. Before them, over the dancing light of the four candles, stood the mutilated picture of Mary, beneath it the dust-covered dagger.

And then the withered monk began speaking, and Blagden listened, looking up at the picture.

"It all happened a great many years ago," said the old man; "but I am old, so I remember.

"Rosa was the girl's name. She lived with her father and mother in a little house above Menaggio. And every day in the warm sunlight of the open fields she sang as she watched the goats for the old people, and her voice was like cool water laughing in the shadows of a little brook.

"She was always singing, little Rosa; for she was young, and the sun had never stopped shining for her. People used to call her beautiful.

" And there was Giovanni. Each morning he would pass her home where the yellow roses with the pink hearts grew so sweetly, and always she would blow him a kiss from the little window.

" Then Giovanni would toil with all the strength of his youth, and he too would sing while he toiled ; for was it not all for her ?

" Often Rosa's goats would stray toward Giovanni's vineyard as dusk came, and they would drive them home together, always laughing, always singing, hand in hand, as the sun slipped golden over the top of the hills across the lake. Sometimes they would walk together in the afterglow, and Giovanni would weave a crown of the little flowers that grew about them, and his princess would wear it, laughing happily.

" They were like two children, Signor. There were nights spent together on the lake, when he told her of his dreams, while the gentlest of winds stirred her curls against his brown cheek, and the moon's wake stretched like a golden pathway from shore to shore.

" They were to be married when the grapes were picked, people used to whisper.

" And then one day a new force came into the girl's life. The Church, Signor !

" No one understands when or why this comes to a young girl, I think. She was torn with the idea that she should join her church, go into the little nunnery across the lake, and leave the sunshine.

" She did not want to go, and it was a strange yet a beautiful thing. This young, beautiful girl who seemed so much a part of the sunshine and the flowers was to close the door of the Church upon it all !

" You are thinking it was strange, Signor.

" Giovanni was frantic—you can understand.

" He had dreamed so happily of that which was to be, that now to have the cup snatched from his lips was torture. He took her little sun-kissed hands in his and begged on his knees with tears streaming down his cheeks. And Rosa wept also—but could not answer as he begged. I think she loved the boy, Signor. Yet there is something stronger than the love of a boy and a girl.

" She asked for one more night in which to decide. She would come up here to this little church and pray for Mary to guide her. He kissed her cold lips and came away.

" He was a boy, and he never doubted that she would choose his strong young arms.

" The girl came here. All night she knelt on the rough stone floor, praying and—weeping; for she loved him. And the Virgin above the four candles looked down with the great, wistful eyes you see—and bound the girl's soul faster and faster to her own.

" And when morning came she entered the white walls across the lake without seeing her lover again.

" Giovanni went mad, I think, when they told him. He screamed out his hate for the world and his God, and rushed up the little white path to where we are sitting now, Signor.

" Once here, he drew the dagger you see beneath the Virgin and stabbed with an oath on his lips. That is why I did not let you touch it."

Blagden nodded, and the old monk was silent for a moment before he went on.

" Giovanni disappeared for two days. When he came back his face was that of a madman still. He was met by a white funeral winding up the little path. You understand, Signor—a virgin's funeral. Giovanni was hurrying blindly past when they stopped him.

" There was no reproach spoken for what he had done, no bitterness; only a kind of awe—and pity.

" Rosa had died on her knees in the nunnery at the exact time he stabbed yonder picture. And they told him months afterward that her face was strangely like that of the Virgin when they found her—beautiful and pleading and sad. There was no given cause for her death—there are things we cannot understand. She was praying for strength, the sisters said."

The monk ceased speaking, and for a long moment they sat silent, Blagden and the withered, white-haired man, staring mutely up at the beautiful face above them. It was Blagden who broke the silence.

" What do you think happened ? " he asked slowly.

" I do not know," said the monk.

There was another pause, then Blagden spoke again.

" Anyway," he said, brushing his hand across his eyes, " she paid in part the debt Giovanni owed his God."

" Yes ? " said the monk softly. " I wonder, Signor ! For I am Giovanni."

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The Defeat of the City, from "The Voice of the City."

The Cop and the Anthem, from "The Four Million."

The Last Leaf, from "The Trimmed Lamp."

The Lost Blend, from "The Trimmed Lamp."

Vanity and some Sables, from "The Trimmed Lamp."

Lost on Dress Parade, from "The Four Million."

Roses, Ruses and Romance, from "The Voice of the City."

'Little Speck in Garnered Fruit,' from "The Voice of the City."